



DELLA DORN
OR
STRUGGLES OF
THE BOERS

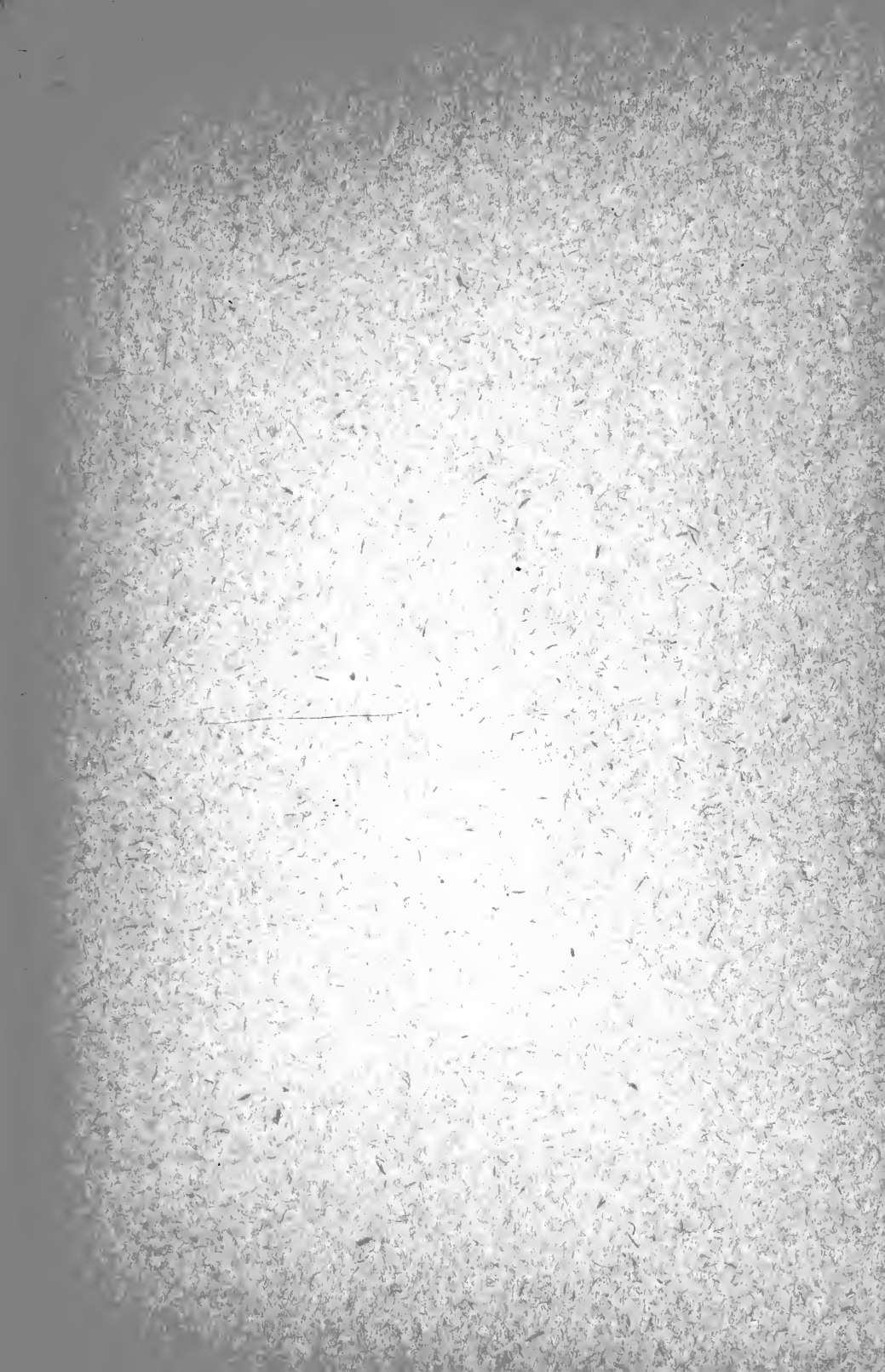


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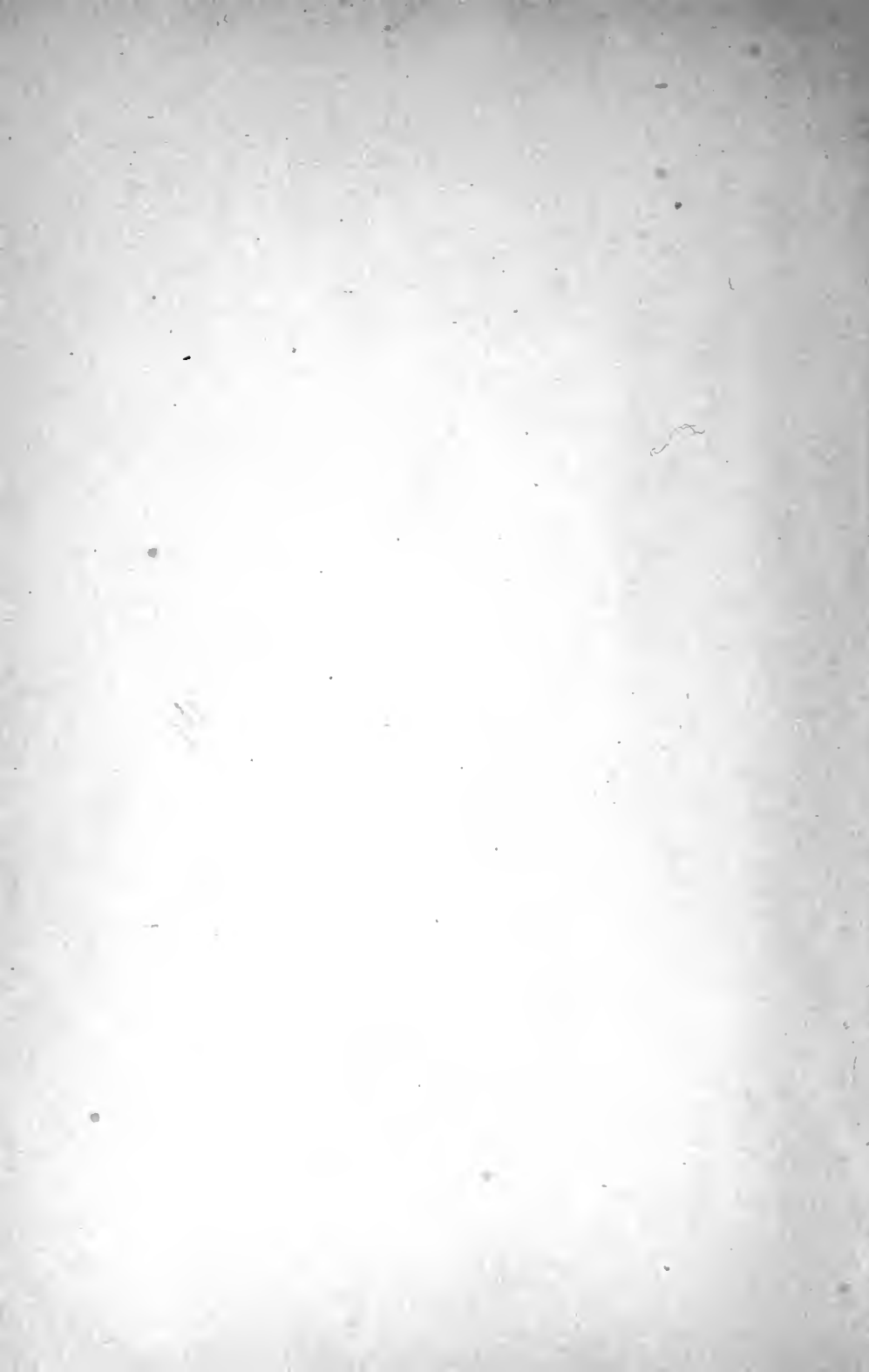
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*Yours Truly
Thos J. Allison*

DELLA DORN

OR STRUGGLES OF THE BOERS

By THOMAS J. ALLISON

If I'm designed yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law designed—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind ?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn ?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn ?
—ROBERT BURNS.

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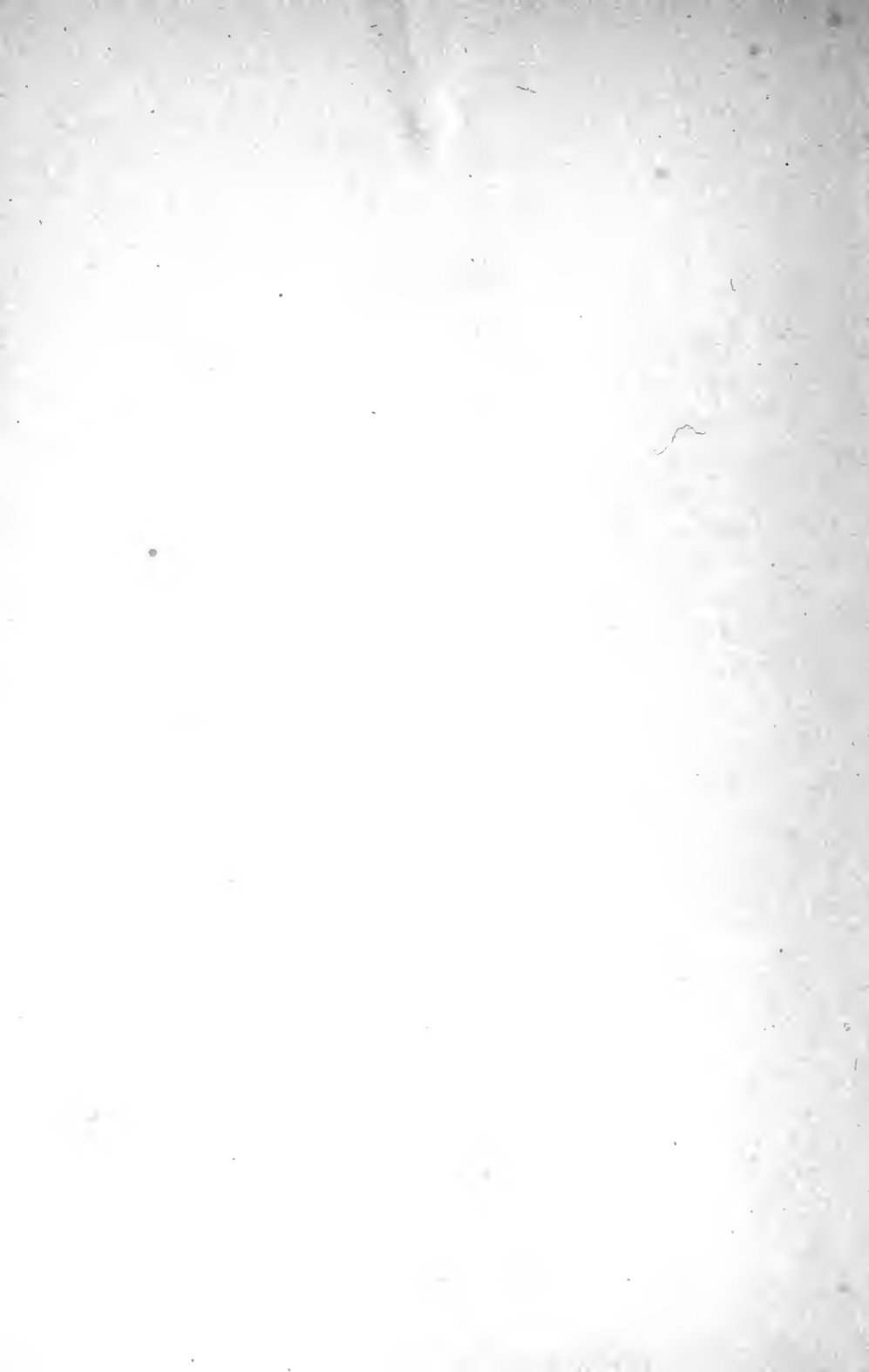
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DEDICATION.

TO ALL THOSE WHO FEEL AN INTEREST IN
HUMANITY AND CAN SHED A TEAR OF
SYMPATHY FOR A SUFFERING
BROTHER,
THIS STORY IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.



PREFACE.

Many epic poems are so commonplace that they afford no enjoyment to persons of even a moderate degree of literary attainment, while others are so abstruse that they can be understood by those only who have mastered the history of all ages.

A poem, to be enjoyed, must be understood, but it cannot give the highest degree of pleasure if it be so explicit as to leave no room for the exercise of the reader's own imagination. It should be only a frame-work which, when completed by the imaginative powers of the reader, will become a beautiful picture.

If the picture is too complete, no matter how beautiful it may be, it will rapidly pass from the reader's mind, because of the feeling that he has not been allowed to take part in its construction.

If the frame-work is too meager, a mind of only moderate imaginative power is unable to complete the structure and hence it fails to become a picture such as the writer had in mind.

In the following story the writer has attempted to avoid these extremes.

Complete notes are appended for the benefit

of those who are not familiar with the history of the South African Republics and are not accustomed to reading works of this nature. Such persons would not be able to enjoy the story without these notes, while there are many who will find no need of them.

While fictitious characters have been introduced for the purpose of illustrating the heroism of the Boers and to make the story more interesting, the poem is based upon the history of their unfortunate struggle—unfortunate for both England and South Africa.

I wish to express my gratitude to my friends, Mr. John O'Byrne, W. I. Simpson and B. F. Phillips for substantial aid, and to Prof. B. C. Chrisman and wife, Mr. B. Cannon, Mrs. J. T. Jeter, and many others for their encouragement in the preparation of this story.

INTRODUCTION.

It is to be hoped that no one will ever attempt to read the following poem without first carefully perusing this brief introductory lesson in the history of the South African Republics. Should anyone read the story without understanding the circumstances which gave it birth, he will deprive himself of the inspiration of the author, his sympathy will be dormant, he will look upon it as a problem in the abstract and the whole story will probably be reduced to a bundle of meaningless rhymes. Even the student of history, who is already familiar with all the circumstances of English domination in South Africa, will find a deepening interest in a review of the trials and unjust burdens of such a brave, though unfortunate, people.

There has probably never been a country with a history so full of pathos, or an existence so disturbed by injustice and indignities. Every act of British rule over the Boers, as those early settlers were called, was but a link in the long chain of oppressions which dated from the moment that the English first set foot upon their soil.

Their history begins about the year 1650, when

some families from Holland, together with a few German, French, and Flemish settlers, formed the nucleus of a Dutch colony near the Cape of Good Hope, the southern extremity of Africa.

Here they lived the simple, patriarchal life common to all pioneer settlements, at perfect peace among themselves and with the world, except the native savages, who occasionally made raids into their settlement; nor did they war with these except so far as was necessary to protect their homes and families from the ravages of those roving, robber bands. Whenever they were attacked by these savages, they fought bravely, but beyond this they gave no evidence of a belligerent spirit. They tended their flocks and herds, built and cultivated their farms and were expert hunters. Game was plentiful on the wild plains and hunting was their chief sport.

While their houses were mostly of rude type, they built comfortable homes, had a regular government and were deeply religious. They seemed to have no spirit of aggressiveness and did not trouble themselves to subdue the natives or acquire lands beyond what they needed for pastoral and agricultural purposes.

They had great respect for the customs and methods of their ancestors and hence progress

was not a prominent feature of their national existence. From time to time they were joined by other settlers, attracted by the hope of greater civil and religious freedom and their financial betterment. Each new contingent at once became a part of the people and all went well until at the end of a century and a half the little colony had grown to be quite an extensive country and their farms and villages covered a wide area.

During all these years it was a Dutch colony, and notwithstanding its dimensions and prosperity, it was still owned and governed by Holland, though there is no intimation that Dutch rule was severe or that it produced any great degree of dissatisfaction in the minds of the Boers. While Holland had been their benefactor, and they, no doubt, felt grateful for her assistance, they probably, also, felt that one hundred and fifty years of service was sufficient to fully compensate her for all she had done, and, being now able to take care of themselves, they sought their independence in 1795. The United States of America had gained its freedom from English rule less than a decade before and the French Revolution, which had completely changed governmental affairs in France and shaken the foundation of almost every European government,

had come to an end and the Napoleonic wars had just begun. All things considered, it would seem that this was a propitious moment for them to strike for liberty. Holland was unable to hold them, but England took charge of the colony, claiming to do so as a friend to Holland.

In 1804 it was delivered to Holland, but in 1806 the English retook it and Cape Colony has been a British province ever since.

In 1815 Holland relinquished all claims to it, which firmly established British supremacy in that region.

An attempt was at once made to destroy the nationality of the Boers. The Dutch language was forbidden in the courts and schools and every possible effort was made to make the Boers feel their dependence upon the British.

So harsh was English rule, that in 1840 great numbers of the Boers left their farms and moved northward and settled, some in Natal and others in neighboring sections.

In a short time the British annexed Natal to Great Britain just as she had Cape Colony.

Again, many of the Boers left their second country and settled in Orange Free State, but in 1849 the English took that also.

Many of them again left the country and set-

tled in the Transvaal, where a small settlement had previously been made. About this time the English began to be attacked by the native tribes around them and they appealed to the Boers for help, which was refused. The English began now to see how difficult it would be for them to hold the territory against both the natives and the Boers, and in 1852 they made a treaty which assured the Boers that they would never be interfered with north of the Vaal river.

This is called the "Sand River" treaty. Orange River Free State, two years later, was given similar assurance of immunity from British disturbance, by the treaty of "Aliwal North." Notwithstanding these assurances, in 1877 Mr. Shepstone, the British Secretary of Natal, forcibly seized the Transvaal for the British Crown, under pretense that the Boers were too weak to resist the attacks of the natives.

The real truth of the matter was that they were not able to resist the attacks of both the barbarous native and faithless Briton.

This state of affairs continued until 1880, when the Boers of the Transvaal, unwilling to longer suffer the indignities of British insolence, resolved to fight for their freedom, and an attack was accordingly made on some British troops

who were making their way to Pretoria, the Capital of Transvaal.

The British were defeated in this battle and surrendered to the Boers. Three other battles, in all of which the Boers were victorious, were fought in this war. The last was the battle of Majuba Hill, in which the British lost 283 officers and men in killed, wounded and prisoners, while the Boers lost only one killed and five wounded. Gladstone was at this time Prime Minister of England and, having a greater sense of justice than most Englishmen seem to have had, he summarily stopped the war.

This was in 1881. In 1884 the Boers were again assured by the terms of the London Convention that Britain would never again interfere with her affairs.

About this time it began to dawn upon the world that the Transvaal had one of the richest gold mines in existence. Thousands of foreigners flocked to these gold fields and soon the foreign element outnumbered the original settlers four or five to one. Almost at once trouble began. It was a rather awkward situation. A very great majority of the people were being governed by the minority, without any voice whatever in the government. Most of these foreigners probably

cared but little who governed them, but England saw her opportunity and did not fail to make use of it. British papers were freely circulated among the miners, explaining the injustice of existing conditions, and soon there was a clamor for suffrage. Paul Kruger, President of Transvaal, opposed the enfranchisement of foreigners, for he well knew that if this element was allowed to vote, England would soon be in possession of the government, and the experience of the Boers with the English made this, above all other things, the most undesirable.

He felt unwilling to surrender his country to a nation which had already robbed his people of three out of the four homes which they had settled. In 1895 the English made a raid into the Transvaal for the purpose of overthrowing the Government. This raid was led by Col. F. W. Rhodes and Dr. L. S. Jameson, though it is believed that Cecil Rhodes, Premier of Cape Colony, planned the expedition. Cecil Rhodes, brother of F. W. Rhodes, was an immensely rich Englishman who lived at Kimberly near the western border of Orange Free State, and was hated by the Boers, probably above all other men. He had been constantly interfering in their affairs and had thus rendered himself supremely odious.

The Boers brought the Jameson Raid to a sudden termination by turning out with their rifles and capturing the entire posse.

If these had been Boers raiding British territory they would have been hung at once, no doubt, but the Transvaal Government turned them over to the English authorities, and they were tried on the charge of invading a friendly country and imprisoned, which was probably meant as punishment for their failure, more than for the crime.

From these developments and the increasing clamor for suffrage, Kruger now saw that the English were bent upon the destruction of the infant republic, even if it took bullets instead of ballots, and in 1899 he consented to foreign franchise after a residence of seven years and oath of allegiance, provided England would agree to submit national differences to arbitration.

Britain objected to the "Arbitration" requirement and demanded a five years' franchise instead of seven.

England was a member of The Hague Conference which proposed to settle all National disputes by arbitration, and it seems a little queer that she would object to it just now. But it should be remembered that Transvaal was de-

nied a seat at The Hague in May, 1899, which denial was based upon England's objection. This is probably the Key which unlocks all mystery in the matter. England no doubt thought that her guns could settle all disputes between herself and Transvaal more satisfactorily than any Court of Arbitration, and she did not propose to be brought under obligation to the Boers or to the other Powers to settle those differences in any such manner.

It is said that Mr. Kruger even agreed to the five years franchise, but that, so eager was Mr. Chamberlain for immediate conquest of the country, he did not even present the proposal to the British Parliament. Negotiations of this kind went on during August and September and all this time England was making preparations for an invasion, and Transvaal was preparing to meet it if necessary. At last, the Transvaal Council decided that the English were only parleying in order to gain time to mass more troops and become more firmly stationed on the Transvaal borders, and on the 9th of October, 1899, Mr. Kruger sent a note to Mr. Green, the British agent at Pretoria, stating that unless the British should cease to land troops, and unless they should remove further from his border those al-

ready there by five o'clock P. M. of the 11th, he should consider it a declaration of war. It could scarcely be supposed that England would comply with this demand, when war was the very thing upon which she had already determined.

On October 11th shortly after noon, Mr. Green brought to Mr. Kruger, Dr. Reitz and Wemmers, as they sat in the Executive Hall, a note from the British Government, breaking off all further negotiations, and from that moment war was inevitable. The reception of this note is sufficiently described in the text and notes of this story.

While it may seem unjust that a majority of the people should be governed by a minority, it should be remembered that this was the Country which England had promised never again to disturb. It was the country of the Boers and they should have had the right to control it, no matter who came. If they considered it dangerous to grant suffrage to the great number of foreigners, it was not only their right, but their duty to withhold it. Of course, there could be but one result hoped for—that of victory for England.

The population of Transvaal was only 150,000, while that of Great Britain was 300,000,000, and with such disparity in numbers the Boers them-

selves could not hope to win without help from other nations. They, however, felt that the justice of their cause would excite the sympathy of other nations, which it did, but not to the extent of giving them aid. In 1897, the Orange Free State and Transvaal had entered into an agreement that in case the independence of one of these territories was threatened, the other would come to its assistance unless it could be shown that the threatened country was at fault and, as will be seen from the following story, President Steyn of the Orange Free State responded promptly when war was declared against the Transvaal.

There was also quite a number of Cape Colony volunteers, and a few from other countries. Colonel Blake, an American Irishman, raised a company of volunteers in the United States and went to the assistance of the Boers. This was known as "Blake's Irish Brigade," and won for itself the reputation of being as good "Fighting Stuff" as the Boer army possessed.

Beyond these the Boers had no assistance and in the end were forced to yield. It is unnecessary to mention the Concentration camp in this connection, as this barbarous war method is fully dealt with in the text. Suffice it to say that in

all probability this one measure, in which England seemed determined to punish women and children, even to death, for the persistence of the soldiers in the field, had more to do in causing the Boers to surrender than all other British measures combined. But England paid pretty dearly for her victory. The territory which she gained cost her nearly \$7,000 per square mile, besides the lives of more than 22,000 killed and about 74,000 invalided home.

I am not in possession of an estimate of the Boer losses, but feel pretty sure that England would be unable to offset her 22,000 killed, even by counting the 14,000 children which died in the concentration camps as a result of her cruel measures. England has gained a country with one of the richest gold mines in the world, but this will lack much in paying her for the one item of prestige which she has lost.

She has been one of the most powerful nations of the earth and a glorious country. She can boast of some of the loftiest minds that the world has produced. She is yet a great and powerful country, but when she allowed us to see that it took her nearly three years to subdue an army of men whom she considered too ignorant for self-government, and with a force five or ten

times as large as theirs, then we begin to wonder why we ever considered her so powerful.

Yes, England is a glorious country, but she has reached the zenith of her glory. The love of wealth and power, unmixed with justice and mercy, is her ruling passion, and the canker-worm of decay is gnawing at her vitals.

Long has a continuous sun shone over her dominions, but today it is descending toward her western horizon, and ere long it will set never to rise. Then, like Greece and Rome, her only pride will be in her history.

DELLA DORN
OR
STRUGGLES OF THE BOERS.
(INVOCATION)

Oh, Thou, Who didst in days of old
Direct the pen of poets bold,
And round them nightly visions cast
Of weal, of woe and trumpet blast,
And held beneath omniscient eye
Each nation's final destiny:
Thou, who dost yet in varied mold
Republics, Kingdoms, Empires hold,
And fashion each as best to fill
The measure of thy sovereign will:
Thou, Who dost still against the strong
Avenge the weak of ev'ry wrong,
And bind the wounds of broken hearts
Made by unjust and selfish darts;
Inspire my soul, direct my pen,
That I may teach my countrymen,
Sons of Columbia's worthy sires
Within whose breast still burn the fires
Of freedom, bought with patriot's blood
On many a field a sanguine flood.
Oh, aid me teach to them the cost

Of freedom won or freedom lost,
And point them to a noble race
From whom the world had turned its face,
And heeded not its struggling throes
'Gainst fearful odds of battling foes ;
And how its sons for freedom fought
And baffled cultured skill and thought
With naught but brain and manly heart
To shelter from the tyrant's dart.

Oh, that Columbia's sons could feel
How ill the fate when tyrant's heel
Has crushed a nation's bleeding heart
And forced it reeking to the mart
And made in anguish there behold
Like merchandise her children sold,
When hope no charm to future lends
And death is but where anguish ends.
Oh, give me courage, make me bold
That I may ev'ry page unfold
Where heaven records the direst fate
Of those who rob of freedom's state
Those who were made with equal share
Of gifts divine and heavenly care ;
For heaven ordains that man must pay
A forfeit for unequal sway :
A recompense of loss and pain

Is blent with base and selfish gain,
And Justice would not dare revoke
A just decree by nations broke,
But raze each nation to the dust
Whene'er it ceases to be just.

DELLA DORN
OR
STRUGGLES OF THE BOERS.

CHAPTER I

Beyond the Vaal there lies a land,¹
By zephyrs from the tropics fanned;²
A favored spot on Afric's plain
With streams more fair than Clyde or Seine,
And, nestled in the mountain cove,
The timid deer and cooing dove
Found each a home—a sly retreat—
From sportsman's ken and noonday heat.
The sunny peaks, where mountains rise
And pierce the dome of Southern skies,
Like sentries, stationed guard to keep
O'er nameless graves where heroes sleep,
Looked down upon the fertile plain,
All rich with fields of golden grain,
Whose yearly harvest³ always brought

¹This is the country North of the Vaal river between that stream and the Limpopo, in South Africa, and is known as the Transvaal.

²The tropic of Capricorn passes through the Transvaal, and hence it lies partly within the tropics.

³The inhabitants of Transvaal were an agricultural as well as pastoral people.

The sturdy farmers all they sought.
The sparkling brooks and trickling rills
Came skipping down the forest hills,
As from their crystal founts they sped
To vales where flocks and herds are spread
In countless numbers. Oh, how sweet
To watch where brooks and streamlets meet
As they, like lovers' voices, blend,
And ever onward, downward trend,
And o'er the pebbles rippling go
To reach the glassy lake below;
Or, ling'ring in each eddying curl,
Like maidens, dance in mazy whirl,
As from each drop rare jewels gleam,
Reflected from the sun-lit stream.
Nor wear they thus those gems for show,
But careless of their beauty go,
Allowing but one glimpse of light
From them to meet our anxious sight;
Coquettish baffling all who fain
Another glimpse from them to gain,
And hurrying on to reach the edge
Of some high cliff—some rocky ledge,
Whose trembling height the trees o'erlook
That stand below beside the brook,
Nor shudder at the quiv'ring brink,
But, hand in hand they trusting link,



Its mossy banks o'erspread with fern
Formed rustic seats at ev'ry turn
Where whispered love and plighted vows
Were wafted through o'erhanging boughs.



And with their faces all aglow,
They leap into the stream below,
And join with countless friendly drops,
Whose streamlet songs had reached the tops
Of those high cliffs their flight to urge
On down to ocean's restless surge.

II

The Limpopo,¹ whose murm'ring roar
Made music for th' admiring Boer,
More softly sang, when on its shore
The Transvaal² maids their lovers met,
And days for nuptial feasts were set.
Its mossy banks o'erspread with fern
Formed rustic seats at ev'ry turn,
Where whispered love and plighted vows
Were wafted through o'erhanging boughs
Of elm and oak and sighing pine.
No spot on earth seemed so divine,
For wave-washed bowers by Nature made
Bear 'semblance fair to Eden's shade,
Where first the songs of love were sung
By man to maid when earth was young.
Oh, happy pair—primeval twain,

¹The Limpopo river is the northern boundary line of the Transvaal. It first flows North, then East into the Indian ocean.

²The term "Transvaal" means, literally, "Beyond the Vaal."

Who dwelt on Eden's lovely plain,
Thy strains were but repeated o'er,
When lovely maid and gallant Boer
Sang songs of love, by Limpopo,
You sang six thousand years ago.
They learned to love that rolling stream,
For it was blent with ev'ry dream,
Each youthful passion's brightest gleam,
And on its bosom seemed to bear
Their hopes, their secrets and their care.

III

The mocking-bird that lingered near,
And seemed to bend a list'ning ear,
Repeated each sweet accent o'er,
As, wafted from that mossy shore
The lute's sweet tones in melting strain,
In cadence, such as softens pain
And lulls an aching heart to rest,
Or brings a sigh to lover's breast,
Enchanting filled the fragrant air
With breathings soft as maiden's prayer.

IV

The gentle slopes, the rolling hills
But led to plains of wilder thrills
Where forests, stretching far and wide,
Traversed by streams on ev'ry side
With tangled vines and flowering trees,

Each waving welcome to the breeze,
Held many a home of patriot brave,
Who would but smile to see his grave,
If 'twere the price his land to save.

V.

Upon those plains and sacred hills,
More sacred made by former ills,¹
Once lived a happy, noble race
With freedom's beam on ev'ry face,
And in each eye a spark that shone
More bright than earth's most valued stone.
Nor was that gleam of giddy kind,
As in the gay we often find,
But sober, just, religious² look,
That grosser eyes would fail to brook,
With feature waves that hap'ly blend,
As when we meet a childhood friend,
And over all those gentle flows
That give to comrades best repose.

VI

A land too new for gorgeous homes,
Or gilded spires and costly domes;
Or ivied porch, artistic bowers,
Creations but of older Powers;
Or laden coffers gained by spoil,

¹Reference is here made to their former treatment by England, mentioned in the Introduction.

²The Boers were deeply religious.

Or wrung from hard and honest toil,
But rich in such as mountains hold
Of brightest gems and purest gold ;¹
The densest thickets, home of birds,
And barer plains for flocks and herds,
With echoing glen and solemn glade,
The hurrying stream and wild cascade,
Were blent as one continuous dream,
Well suited to the poet's theme.

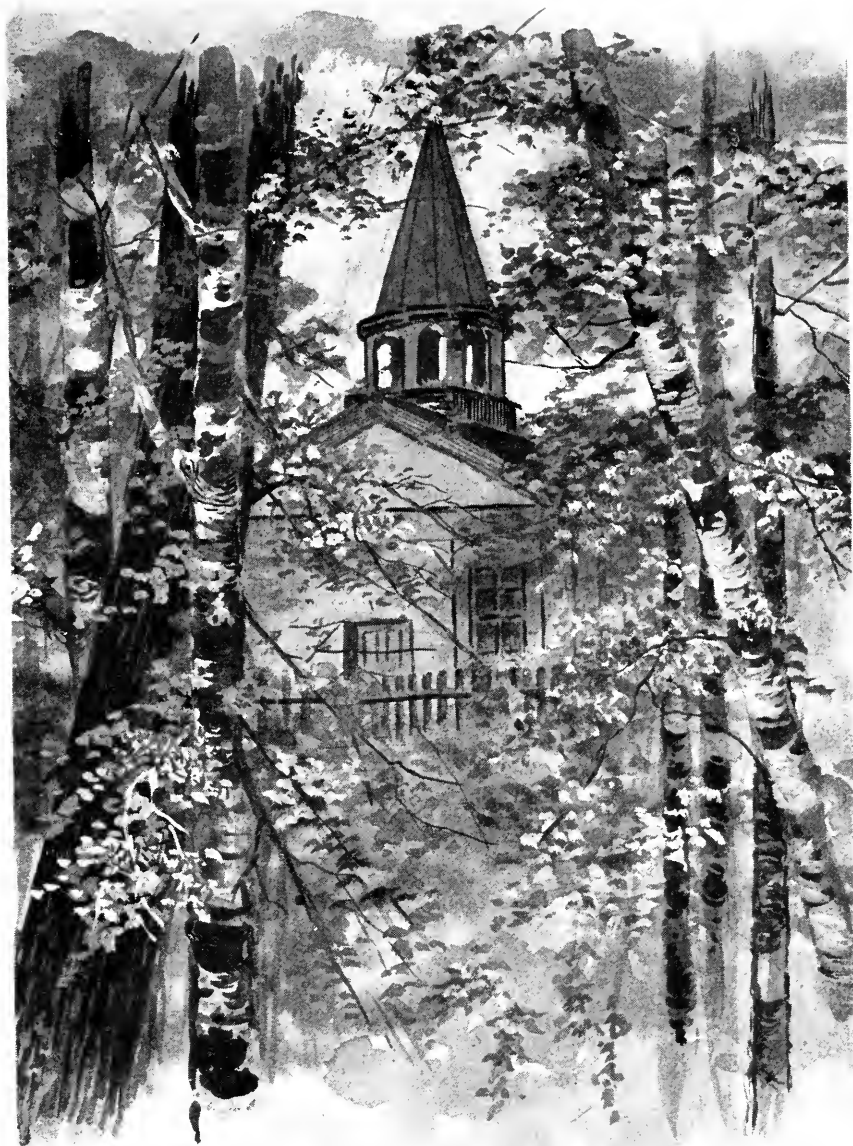
VII

But far more lovely was each spot
Where stood a cozy mountain cot,
Home of the noble, hardy Boer,
Who loved his sports, but freedom more ;
His hand unused to blood and spoil,
But suited more to honest toil,
Delighted not in human gore,
And longed to hear of war no more.

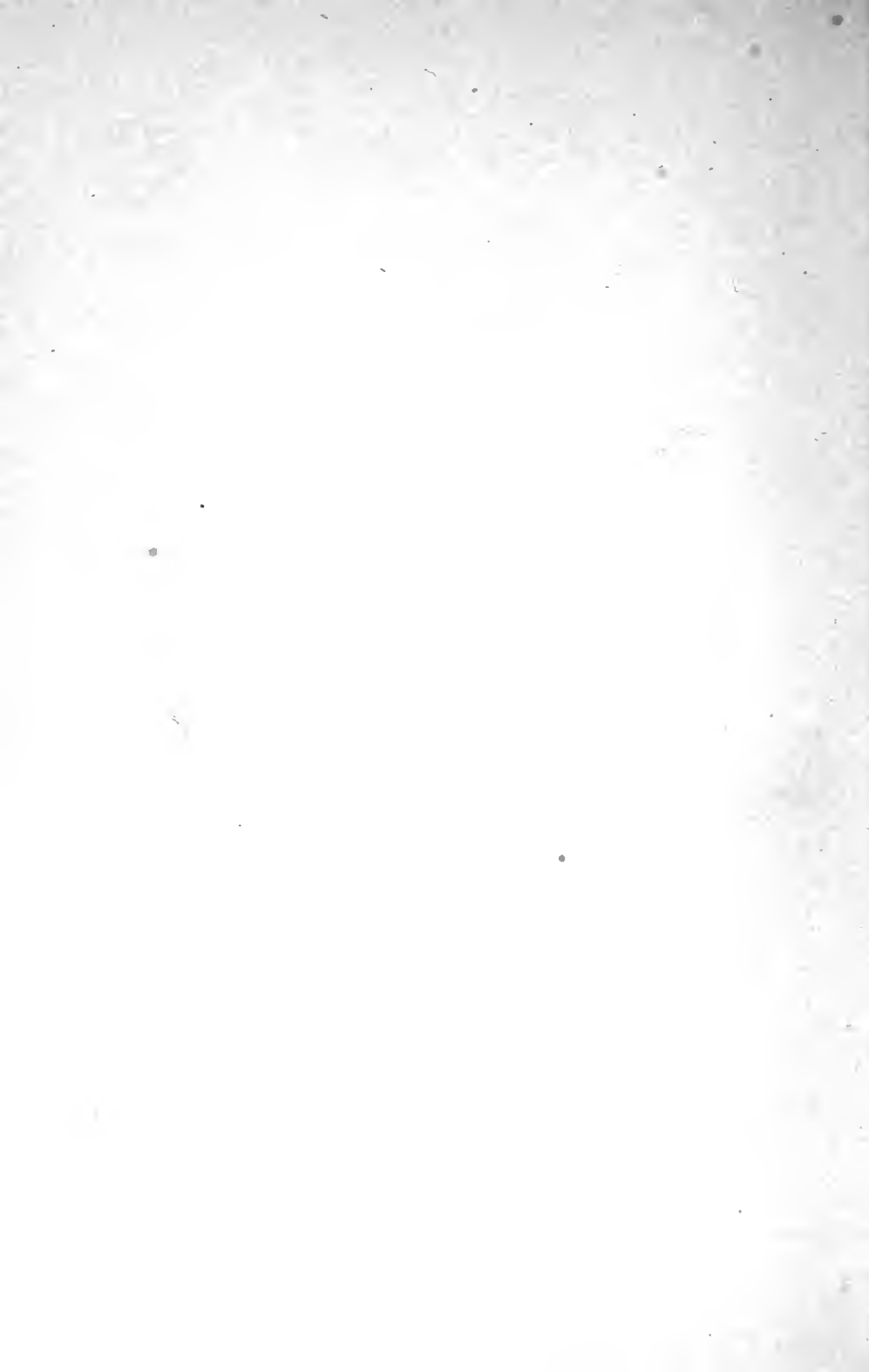
VIII

Beneath the elms and scaly birch,
Half hidden, stood the simple church,
Where ev'ry happy Sabbath day
Called each from toil to sing and pray,
And as their prayers and anthems rose,
They pled for blessings on their foes,

¹The gold-mines of Transvaal are probably the richest in the world, and diamonds also abound in the immediate vicinity.



Beneath the elms and scaly birch
Half-hidden stood the simple church.



Their simple life, their frugal fare;
Chaste conversation, fervent prayer;
Their gen'rous spirit; love of friend;
Such sense of right as would defend,
By ev'ry phase of justice' laws,
A hostile foeman's righteous cause;
Respect for paths ancestors trod,
Alone surpassed by faith in God;
With Valor's gift from sire to son,
The trav'ler's admiration won.

IX

In Calvin's Creed,¹ they gave assent
To ev'ry word its tenets meant,
For each was taught from earliest youth
To deem it all unquestioned truth.
In it each doom was known to God
E'er seas were formed or earthly sod,
And by decree so firmly fixed
That man nor angels stood betwixt,
Nor even God would dare undo
What purpose did or knowledge knew.
So, if they reached a hoary year

¹The principal religious sentiment was that of the Dutch Reformed church, which is Calvinistic. Calvin believed that all things "Whatsoever cometh to pass," was predestinated or predetermined by the Creator before Time began and that the number and identity of those to be saved and those to be lost was thus unalterably fixed.

Or filled the sadder youthful bier ;
If by disease found early graves,
Or, sailing, sank beneath the waves ;
If on the field of hostile strife
They fell, or by assassin's knife,
They deemed it all as foreordained
And still their faith as firm remained.

CHAPTER II.

Beside a gently rising hill,
Where Limpopo's low, murmuring trill
So faintly fell upon the ear,
As though 'twere spirit voices near,
Once stood a plain though pleasant cot,¹
Where sorrow's visits seemed forgot
And every breeze with fragrance fraught
New joys and love of freedom brought.
Its walls were neat, though low and plain,
Nor bore its porch a sanguine stain,
And none who sought a refuge there
From summer's sun or wintry air
Were e'er denied a gen'rous share.

II

The tempting lawn in verdure dressed,
Seemed but where forests paused to rest
And dwell upon the smiling scene
Of blooming peach and field of green,
Its rustic seat, its limpid spring,
And list the songs the warblers sing.
This sacred spot, 'til British mood

¹This cottage is supposed to have stood near the southern bank of the Limpopo river in the extreme northern part of the Transvaal.

Between its lord and freedom stood,
Where morning's brightest beams were born,
Was once the home of Horace Dorn.
O'er many a land he wandered far,
With Liberty his guiding star,
And labored on from year to year,
For Freedom's boon to him so dear.

III

Below the ocean's restless rim,¹
Where fogs and clouds the skies bedim,
And struggling star-beams lost their way,
Nor reached the earth their brightest ray;
Where dikes, the land from ocean pent,
His happy childhood days were spent.
But when those youthful days had flown
And he through youth to manhood grown,
With brow untouched by marks of time,
He sought a more salubrious clime.
To Iran² first, "Land of the sun,"
Which Moslem³ sword had long undone;

¹Much of the surface of Holland is below the level of the ocean, hence fogs and misty clouds are quite prevalent. Inundation is prevented by dikes or embankments.

²*Iran*: Ancient name of Persia, a portion of which is referred to as "Land of the Sun," by Thomas Moore in his *Lalla Rookh*.

³*Moslem*: A follower of Mohammed.

Where Mithra's¹ shrines in ruins lay,
Nor Gheber² dared to disobey
Command to kneel at Allah's³ shrine,
Or count its worship undivine.
Where once Al-hassen proudly trod
Through Gheber's blood to serve his God,
Where many a brave had tried in vain
To free his land from Moslem stain,
Young Horace saw the proudest fall
Before Mohammed's saintly hall,
Though forced at first by Arab's rod,
Submissive now to Moslem nod.

IV

Disgusted with the land of slaves,
Apostate sons of nobler braves,
He sought fair Erin's⁴ verdant shore
And thought to roam the world no more.
But what had been the Persian bane
Here Britain tried, though half in vain,
For, though by force her pride was crushed,
Her valiant sons were never hushed.⁵

¹*Mithra*: Deity of the ancient Persians. They were Fire-worshippers and were conquered by the Arabs and their temples destroyed, and the people forced to embrace the Mohammedan religion, though they, in time, became willing devotees to that form of worship.

²*Gheber*: A Persian Fire-worshipper.

³*Allah*: Arabic name of the Supreme Being, though its general introduction into the Mohammedan worship, makes it, at present, a more essentially Mohammedan than Arabic term.

⁴*Erin*: Ireland. Called also "The Emerald Isle."

⁵Though Ireland has been ruled by England for several centuries, she has never ceased to strive for liberty.

V

Upon a calm November morn
Was seen the form of Horace Dorn,
Whose vessel skimmed the glistening tide,
And on his arm his Celtic¹ bride.
The vessel sped o'er ocean brine
Beyond the equinoctial line,
Where spring, reversed,² beholds the rose
While northern climes are wrapped in snows,
And on the soil of Afric's shores
They sought a home among the Boers.³
They chose a spot⁴ beside the hill,
Where sprang to view a pebbly rill,
Whose dimpling waters sudden sank
Down Limpopo's fair circling bank
To mingle in its constant roar,
And greet the hardy boatman's oar.
Here all the din of war was past,

¹The Irish and Scotch are both of the Celtic race, but in this story, the Irish are invariably meant when the term Celt is used.

²The Transvaal being in the southern hemisphere has opposite seasons to all countries north of the equator.

³*Boer*: A name applied to the Dutch colonists in South Africa. The word in the Dutch language, means "Farmer" or "Dweller." The word "neighbor" is probably derived from the same source.

⁴This is the same spot mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

And they had found a home at last,
Where they might live and worship God,
Untrammelled by a tyrant's rod.

VI

Who can compute th' unmeasured swell,
That rises in the heart's deep well,
Of him who long hath felt the sting
Of foeman's power or tyrant king,
Who sudden finds the galling yoke
Forever gone, his fetters broke,
And holds within his fond embrace
The cherished freedom of his race?

VII

Long years had passed and dimpling still
The brook flowed down the pebbly hill,
But Time had countless changes wrought,
Though mostly those with blessings fraught:
Where once the forest, could be seen
Broad-acred fields of waving green,
And, lavish recompense for toil,
Earth turned to gold¹ the dusky soil.
Still stood ajar the cottage door,
A friendly welcome to the poor,
And all who shared his bounteous board

¹*Turned to gold:* This is not to be construed to mean that Horace Dorn was a miner, but that he became rich from the products of his "broad acres."

Were counted equals with its lord,
'Til all Transvaal that cottage knew
And Horace Dorn more famous grew.

VIII

The whole republic joined in praise
Of bright young Conrad's manly ways,
And hoped, a man of great renown,
To see in him when older grown.
Already was it manifest
His talent was the nation's best,
For in his mind great powers were seen
Ere he had passed his final "teen,"
And questions oft that long menaced
Far older men in honors placed,
On which solution's price was set,
By him with ease were quickly met.
His winter evenings oft he spent
In study of the Orient,
'And with his sister loved to pore
O'er Celtic tales and British lore.
From Limpopo to Vaal¹ he knew
Where cocoa palms spontaneous grew,
And from each mountain-pass and drift²

¹*Limpopo to Vaal:* The Limpopo being the northern and the Vaal the southern boundary of Transvaal, Conrad was evidently well acquainted with the hills and valleys of the entire country.

²*Drift:* A ford on a creek or river.

All doubt of place could quickly lift,
Which hunters deemed his greatest gift.
For him no greater sports were found
Than with his horn and yelping hound
To gallop o'er the level plain
And be the first a glimpse to gain,
For, when he joined the merry race,
He led the vanguard of the chase,
And when he wound his echoing horn,
All knew it was young Conrad Dorn.
His bullets seemed to strike the mark
That distance made to others dark,
Or, if their chances were the same,
His piece was held with steadier aim,
And when the tinchel¹ closed the race,
He bore the trophies of the chase.
Returning home he always found
New joys awaiting him and hound,
Nor failed his mother's heart to bless
By waiting for her fond caress.
When day was lost in twilight haze,
And all had gathered round the blaze
To hear the deeds of daring done,
And share with him the laurels won,

¹*Tinchel*: A circle formed by a number of hunters around their game.

He told them how adown the slope
He chased the deer and antelope,
And how his light and faithful hound
Before the pack was always found,
And how his steed so fleet and strong
Had borne him as the wind along;
Then Horace felt an inward joy
That he had such a noble boy.

IX

But Conrad oft was ill at ease
And longed to stem the billowy seas
And o'er the ocean's swaying foam
To seek his mother's Erin home.¹
Killarney's² lakes and Shannon's³ roar
For him a fascination bore,
And oft in dreams, the only bliss
That woos when sleep the eye-lids kiss,
He saw the bogs⁴ beset with turf
And heard the roar of beating surf,
Beheld the mirth and winsome smile
Of maidens of the Emerald Isle.

¹It will be remembered that Horace Dorn, Conrad's father, married in Ireland.

²Lakes of Killarney in Ireland are said to be the most beautiful lakes in the world.

³*Shannon*: A river in the western part of Ireland.

⁴*Bogs*: Low marshy places which, in Ireland, produce a substance known as "turf" or "bogpeat," which, at one time, was the almost entire source of fuel.

X

Upon the voyage he was bent,
And with his father's kind consent,
A mother's prayer and sister's tears,
And many a friend's ill-augured fears,
He sought the ocean's troubled side
And soon was bounding o'er the tide.
O'er trackless seas the vessel flew
'Til proud Polaris¹ came in view,
And, watching from beside a spar,
He first beheld that brilliant star.
Oh, how his heart with transport filled
As joy untold his spirit thrilled
To catch a glimpse in heaven's blue
That Erin's sons were watching too.

XI

He passed where Moses held the rod²
By the commandment of his God,
Where waters stood like stony walls
As firm and grand as marble halls
And rescued many a Hebrew slave
But gave their foes a watery grave;

¹*Polaris*: The North or Polar star. This star is below the horizon to all points south of the equator and hence Conrad had never beheld it.

²Passing up the eastern coast of Africa, he would necessarily pass through the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic ocean.

And as he leaned beyond the rail,
He almost seemed to hear the wail
Of mothers on the western shore,¹
For sons that came to them no more.

XII

By stern Gibraltar's towering head,
Now westward turned, the vessel sped,
And as he passed that massive stone,
First heard Atlantic's muffled groan,
And out upon its waters wild
The vessel bore the restless child
Of Horace Dorn, who, years before,
Had left that ocean's mournful roar
For Southern Afric's sunny shore.
Still speeding on from day to day,
The vessel held its northward way,
Nor passed a shore or lonely isle,
That would have served the time to while,
'Til near the land the bark at last
In Dingle² Bay its anchor cast.
On board five hundred hearts and tongues
The chorus joined of happy songs
To greet their kindred on the shore
While waiting³ to be wafted o'er.

¹*Western shore:* Egypt.

²*Dingle bay:* A bay on the southwest coast of Ireland.

³*While waiting:* The ship is often anchored in the bay and passengers rowed to land in small boats.

XIII

No picture drawn can e'er portray
The boundless joy of that array,
As they in boats were quickly lowered
And on the crew their blessings showered,
With praise and thanks to Him whose hand
Had brought them safe to Erin's land.
Boat after boat with many an oar
From vessel's side to landward bore
That happy, grateful, singing band,
With dialects from many a strand;
But 'tis no task to sing as one,
When hearts all beat in unison.
The lips but utter what we feel;
The song our inmost thoughts reveal;
For, as the harp with varied string
By skillful touch such measures fling,
So, countless hearts with single aim
May wondrous chords of music frame,
And, when we feel the thrill it brings,
We know it is the heart that sings.

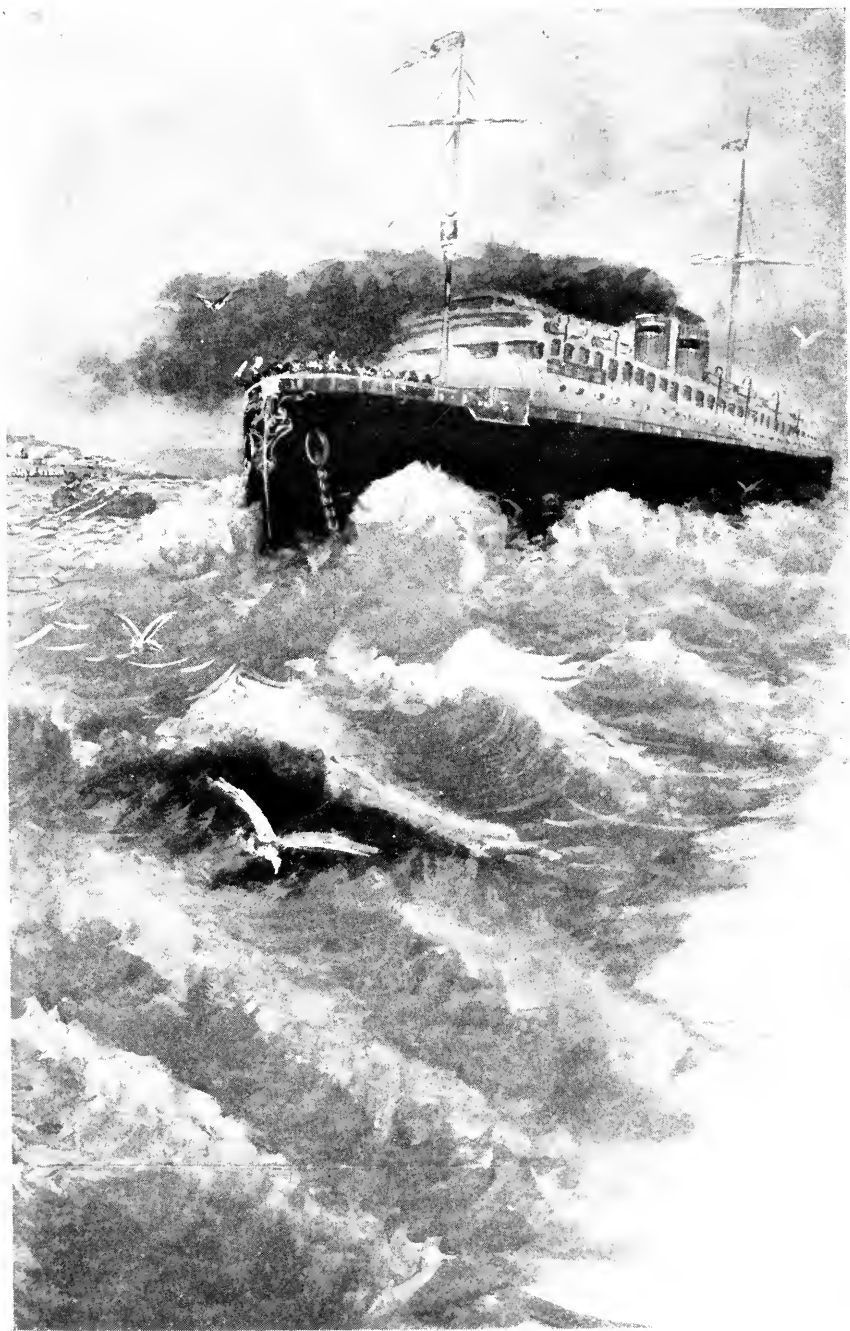
XIV

The boats approach the precious goal,
Ecstatic feelings seize the soul
And song is changed to deaf'ning roar
In answer to the throng on shore.
'Kerchiefs are fluttered by the fair,

And hats by men held high in air,
As loud "Hurrahs" from every tongue
Are wafted far the shore along.

XV

At length they land—the voyage o'er,
With eager haste they leap ashore,
Embraced in arms of many a friend
And blinding tears of rapture blend.
The mothers kiss, the sons embrace,
A sister hastens to the place
Where, through her glimmering tears, she spies
A brother hurrying up the rise,
And, rushing through the joyful crowd,
Upon his neck she sobs aloud.
The social forms of wealth and pride
Are, for the moment, cast aside,
And father, mother, husband, wife,
And children, all are true to life.
But incomplete is all the bliss
'Til father stoops the babe to kiss
And hears it lisp the father's name,
The only word its lips can frame,
And feels its arms his neck entwine:
This is the bliss we call divine.



'Kerchiefs are fluttered by the fair,
And hats by men held high in air.

CHAPTER III.

Young Conrad Dorn stood listening nigh,
With softened heart and moistened eye,
To find a spot so tender grown
In hearts he deemed as hard as stone.
But let us hope no heart to find
In which the chords are all unkind,
For, though 'tis bulwark¹ of the soul,
Still, may some tender tie control,
Or else may nature plan a breach
Through which the soul of man to reach.

II

Young Conrad saw the throng depart
With quickened step and buoyant heart;
All souls had cheer except his own,
And only his seemed all alone,
And as he turned to leave the strand
He saw an aged couple stand,
As if they wished to longer stay
To watch the beauties of the bay.
He noted in their mien and dress
Nor wealth nor poverty's excess,
For pleasure takes its loftiest seat

¹The heart is here called the "bulwark of the soul," by which it is only meant to convey the idea of the soul residing in the heart, the heart forming its covering.

Where wealth and squalor midway meet,
And those who fall below will find
Discomforts oft disturb the mind,
While they who much their wealth increase
Find cares supplant their wonted peace.

III

Approaching now the man and dame,
For information Conrad came,
And, with his hand upon his breast,
He thus the aged pair addressed:
"Your pardon, please, my way has lain
For many weeks upon the main,
And now to Erin I have come
To view my mother's childhood home.
A simple boon I'd ask of thee,
If in thy power that favor be,
Direct my steps unto the door
Where mother lived in days of yore.
Oh, it will be to me a spot
Through life can never be forgot:
When I shall sit beneath the shade,
Where she, when young, so often played,
Or stroll among the garden flow'rs,
Where whiled she oft her girlhood hours,
Or pluck the rip'ning golden pear
And feel her hand has rested there;
"Ten thousand worlds, though offered all,

Were compensation far too small
The sacred thought from me to steal
Or purchase what my soul shall feel."

IV

"Aye, lad, thou seem'st a noble youth;
That tear betrays thy speech's truth,
For none to idle falsehood bow
Who loves his mother such as thou.
For many a year our cot hath stood
Just where yon village meets the wood,
And long to me has been each place
Familiar as a brother's face,
So, surely 'tis within my power
To lead thee to that treasured door;
But name the place and by thy side
My wife and I thy steps will guide."

V

"Ah, thou art kind and thou canst feel
A joy to aid another's weal;
It is the home of John O'Neil.¹
'Tis he, my mother's aged sire,
Who long has framed my chief desire,
And Conrad Dorn, who speaks with thee,
Has crossed the brine that face to see,

¹The O'Neil was once a powerful family at the head of a great clan in the north of Ireland, but were doubtless dispossessed and driven southwestward with most of the other nobles after the barbarous invasion under Cromwell.

"And dear grandmother, Oh, what joy,
When she shall see her daughter's boy,
And from his lips receive the kiss
Sent to remind of former bliss.
Prolong no more my deep suspense,
But, if thou canst, direct me hence."

VI

As Conrad spake he saw a flame
Come o'er the face of man and dame,
As when Aurora's blushes rise
To light the face of northern skies.
Across their brows were wavelets sent
Of pleasant smiles and wonder blent;
Their eyes were fixed upon his own
And stood they speechless as a stone.
A moment more in silent maze
On Conrad's youthful face they gaze,
And, when from trance they sudden woke,
The man that painful silence broke.
"Ah, wife," said he, "give God the praise
For length'ning out our aged days
'Til we've beheld an angel come
To bless our humble, childless home."
And kneeling there upon the sod,
A fervent prayer was sent to God.

VII

In sore amazement Conrad stood
And viewed the couple as they bowed,
With queryings much if they were sane,
Or whether madness seized the brain,
For pity so engrossed his care
He scarcely heard the words of prayer;
And though the words were strong and clear
With evidence of Godly fear,
Their accents scarcely reached his ear.
From matin rose the aged pair
With an almost angelic air,
And marking Conrad's sore surprise
And pitying tears that filled his eyes,
The old man's voice in measure broke,
And thus he to young Conrad spoke:
"Ah, Conrad Dorn, becalm thy fears
And soon thou'lt learn, what now appears
A myst'ry to thy 'wilder'd mind.
This tale will full solution find,
For ev'ry sob, for ev'ry tear,
And all that gave thee cause to fear.
Long years ago we had a child,
A daughter true and lovely, mild,
With eye as soft as morning's hue,
And cheek as faultless as the dew.
Her infant laugh and childish glee

"From room to room or on my knee,
Her wildest carol, choicest song,
That floated as the breeze along,
Bore charms for many a list'ning ear,
That lingered long that voice to hear.

VIII

"But time's relentless cycles flew,
And she from child to maiden grew,
Though kindly years increased the mold
Of ev'ry grace a hundredfold.
Her eye so soft had softer grown,
And o'er her cheek a blush had flown;
Her lips were colored as the flowers
Where she had spent her happiest hours,
And ready hands and willing feet
Rejoiced our slightest wants to meet.
She met a youth from Iran's shore,
Whom good report had come before;
He came, admired; he loved and won
That brightest beam from parents' sun.
They chose beneath our roof to dwell,
And evenings heard their voices swell
The songs that we had loved so well,
'And when familiar we had grown,
We learned to love him as our own.

IX

'There came a day of sorest ill
That now my soul with sorrows fill,¹
And almost bids my heart be still,
When o'er the ocean's shifting sands,
They sought a home in foreign lands,
And back to this, our lovely shore,
Our jewels came to us no more.
Then wonder not that we're forlorn,
Those gems were Jane and Horace Dorn,
And thou that angel sent to bless,
And bear thy mother's kind caress.
Take thou this hand within thy grasp
And thou shalt find a welcome clasp,
And we will lead thee to the door
Thy parents left in days of yore."
To take the youth in her embrace
Grandmother came with tottering pace;
Upon his breast she leaned her head,
And as she sobbed she faintly said:
"God bless the day that wafted o'er
A son like this to Erin's shore."
With heaving breast and speechless tongue

¹I know of no rule of language that tolerates this error, but it appears to me that when a verb is well separated from its nominative singular, and follows a plural noun, the verb should be plural when the sense is not thereby weakened. There are several such instances in this story.

The tear-drop from his eye he flung,
And to her loving lips he bent
And placed the kiss his mother sent.

X

His mother's image Conrad bore
In eyes of softness, look of lore,
And e'en the tint of lips was traced
To hers, ere age those tints defaced,
And, had he been of merit shorn,
Still was he the son of Horace Dorn,
And this alone sufficed to make
Them love him more for parents' sake.

XI

The happy hours, where pleasure speaks,
Melt into days and days to weeks;
Unconscious glides a passing year,
If free from pain or sorrow's tear,
But swifter far the moments fly,
When Love's bright angel hovers nigh
And from her gently flut'ring wing
Upon the soul her dew-drops fling.

XII

'Twas thus the days of Conrad passed,
Outstripping time, the moments haste
In quick succession; morn and eve
Small intervenings seemed to leave,
And joys that came at opening dawn,

At evening still were unwithdrawn.
The lakes, the streams, the smiling eyes,
That in his dreams were wont to rise,
Surpassing all that dreams can tell,
Upon his raptured vision fell.
Gay gatherings in his honor met,
And many a festive board was set,
And pleasant rides were often planned
O'er field and brook and ocean strand,
While maidens with each other vied
To find a place by Conrad's side.

XIII

The moments thus by Conrad spent
Much joy to his grandparents lent,
For 'twas as though new life begun
With Conrad as their only son.
To them, his smile was brighter far
Than rays combined of ev'ry star,
And beams that from his eyelids glanced,
Not only them, but all entranced.
Oft by his side at eve they strolled,
Where Moine¹ its limpid waters rolled,
And watched with him the flickering ray
Of moonbeams dancing on the bay.
He valued not a call to tea,

¹*Moine*: A small stream which flows into Dingle Bay.

Where his grandparents could not be,
And when their slightest wish he spied,
At once he hastened to their side.
What matter though his lady fair
Should seem absorbing all his care;
When conversation sweetest flowed
Or in the dance the brightest glowed
The beauteous cheek of Celtic belle,
Or on the ear wild music fell?
Each wish of all must be denied
When their least want was unsupplied.
He saw them placed on easiest seat,
Their plate supplied with choicest meat,
And wine sat worthless at his side,
Until its flavor they had tried.
All marked the gentle, loving care
With which he served the aged pair,
And matrons felt the warm tear start,
When they beheld the artless art
Which only such devotions give,
And only in the heart can live;
And when they praised him for his care
He only said, with careless air:
"In youth we well can bear to wait,
But help to age may come too late."

CHAPTER IV.

Though Conrad drank from pleasure's store,
He thirsted still for British lore,
And 'mid farewells of parting grief,
To which his thirst gave small relief,
He bade adieu to Erin's shore
To mingle with its scenes no more,
And, 'neath the domes of London, sought
To find the depth of British thought.
Within her parks and courts and schools
He learned the trend of English rules
And studied well the Briton's share
In arts of peace and arts of war.
But most of all he loved his horse
And telegraphic code of Morse,¹
And in his sports with ease could gain
The prize, in use of spur and rein,
While from his desk, o'er laden wires,
His message flashed like lightning's fires.

¹*Code of Morse:* A code of signals invented by Samuel F. B. Morse for use at a telegraph station, and consists of dots, dashes and spaces which are transmitted to the instrument by means of an electric current.

II

His comrades tried but tried in vain
Such graceful skill and speed to gain,
But Conrad's swift and nimble touch
And easy grace were always such,
That those who dared with him to vie,
Ne'er cared a second time to try.

III

But Saris, full of youthful blood,
In challenge now with Conrad stood.
Said Saris: "I'll a message send
With all the grace that thou canst lend,
And our preceptor, if he will,
Shall mark the speed of each, and skill.
Nerve thou thyself! the contest brave!
And if thou canst, thine honor save!"

IV

With equal zeal they join the strife,
As if on it depended life,
And summoned each his greatest power,
That best could serve such trying hour.
The redd'ning cheeks, the eyes of fire
Burn now with zeal, but not with ire,
Impatient each the key to press,
Each confident of his success.

First, to the key¹ young Saris comes;
Along the wire his message hums,
While Conrad views with mute surprise
How swift the hand of Saris flies,
And to belief is almost driven
The palm to Saris must be given,
For he that can such rival stand
Must have no less than perfect hand.

V

The message finished, Saris rose
With look triumphant, such as foes
Who win so oft delight to throw
Upon their lately vanquished foe.
The master from his distant room²
Bade now the next contestant come,
And Conrad bent a suppliant knee
And took his seat before the key.
In firm resolve he found relief,
That changed his former fear and grief;
Devotion was to fingers lent
Which lightness gave to message sent.
With wondrous touch the words resound

¹*Key:* For convenience, in all references to the telegraph instrument in this story, it is termed "Key" whether in the matter of receiving or sending messages. The reader should also remember that this telegraphic contest takes place in one of the London schools.

²*Distant room:* The master is supposed to occupy some distant room and not to know in what order the applicants come.

As leaping hare before the hound,
And with a skill ne'er reached before
The wire his lightning message bore.
Young Saris now with changeful mood
The flying hand of Conrad viewed
And almost wished the challenge rued;
Nor did he seem to understand
What faith had lent to Conrad's hand.

VI

At last has flown the final word,
No more the sound of key is heard;
Each rival now in silence stands,
With solemn mien and folded hands,
To wait the master's just decree,
So soon to sound upon the key.
A "click" is heard, at once they turn,
Suspended hope their faces burn;
Upon the key each ear is bent
For ev'ry word by master sent,
For in their sharp and mingled sound
The master's verdict will be found.
At length 'tis finished: Saris' head
Has dropped and all his color fled,
For thus the master's sentence read:
*"The last was best, though first was near;
Decide ye, who the palm shall wear."*



The palm-leaf from the sable stand
Young Saris snatched with trembling hand,
And raising it to Conrad's breast
He thought to pin it to his vest.



VII

The palm leaf from the sable stand
 Young Saris snatched with trembling hand,
 And, raising it to Conrad's breast,
 He thought to pin it to his vest,
 And, musing, said: "*The challenge mine;
 To wear this leaf of palm is thine.*"
 But Conrad back a pace withdrew;
 His face had lost its flushen hue;
 A brave impulse had seized his breast,
 And sadness marked his youthful crest.
 "Nay, Saris, nay, too brave thou art
 To do for me such servile part.
 Such humble acts are only meant
 To give the hate of tyrants vent,
 Or to a brave, though vanquished foe,
 Beyond defeat a crushing blow.
 The master said '*we should decide,*'
 So let us now the palm divide,
 And each shall on his bosom place
 This evidence of skill and grace.
 'Twere such small stint that gave the prize,
 I could not bear to sport the guise
 Of champion o'er such hand as thine,
 And know that it had equaled mine."

VIII

"No, Conrad, no, 'tis all thine own;
The master's word hath wisdom shown.
I knew, when thou wast at the key,
The prize was never meant for me.
'Twould be for me but low disgrace
To claim with thee an equal place,
And but remains me now to ask
Your pardon for the challenge task."

IX

At length the palm leaf Conrad took;
His very frame emotion shook;
And as he gazed upon the prize
And to decide a moment tries,
A resolution o'er him came
That Saris must not suffer shame,
And to his lips the leaf he pressed
And thus his rival friend addressed:
"No, Saris, I can never wear
What might cause thee a sigh or tear,"
And with firm hand and look sedate
He thrust the palm into the grate.
"Now we are peers, no more I claim,
And Saris' equals *Conrad's* name,
And what of honor comes to me
An equal portion's meant for thee.
And, now, pray tell from whence you come;

Where is thy country, friends and home?
For surely it is well to be
In constant touch with such as thee,
And well I know such heart and hand
Were never bred on British land."

X

"My home is far beyond the sea,
Upon a soil that's fair and free,
Where friendship blooms as mountain rose,
And none but savages are foes.
Where heart to heart responsive thrills
With love as true as echo trills;
Where Vaal's fair waters gently flow
On down to Orange"—

"Saris, ho!

What! Orange? Vaal? Say now no more;
Thou art an Africander—Boer."
The rising blood his features flushed;
To Saris' side he wildly rushed,
And grasping now his willing hand,
The rivals like two brothers stand.
"My home is, too, on Afric's shore,
Where Limpopo its waters pour,
And circling waves of light expand
Above its glist'ning golden sand,
Where Transvaal lad delights to woo
His maid as pure as mountain dew.

Yes, 'tis a country free and brave;
A land its sons would die to save."

XI

Each held in other's close embrace;
The grateful tears each other chase
Adown each noble, youthful face,
For strife, that oft in conflict ends,
Had made of them far closer friends.

XII

Each now unto his room retired,
By valor of his friend inspired.
Each knew that in the other's heart
Could dwell no thought of selfish art,
And each had found a faithful friend
That would his name and cause defend.

XIII

As Conrad sat in musing mood
His Transvaal shores his fancy viewed
And all his childish scenes renewed.
He saw his home beside the hill,
And heard the murm'rings of the rill,
And from the oaken giants tall
He saw the rip'ning acorns fall.
Once more he saw, around the fire,
His mother, sister, and his sire,
As in low sighs of deep concern
They long in vain for his return.

XIV

A sudden shrill and piercing sound
(Just as he stoops to pet his hound)
Rings out a loud and quivering key
Like some wild bird in revelry,
And like the stars that flee at dawn
His dreamish reverie is gone.
With sudden start and senses blurred
Young Conrad now himself bestirred,
And, quick as sense he can recall,
He hears approaching footsteps fall.

XV

"Who can it be! that with such scream
Dispels my pleasant home-land dream?"
Again that wild, discordant sound—
"Ah, 'tis the post-man on his round.
I should have known that noisy blast
Even though deep slumber held me fast,
For though the streets with whirring din
Are noisy kept by busy men,
The post-man's shrill though welcome call
Is plainly heard above them all.

XVI

"Good morning, Post-man, can it be
That thou a letter hast for me?"
"Aye, sir, and from the stamp and hand
It must be from some foreign land."

XVII

Young Conrad, with an anxious look,
The letter from the post-man took,
And, as he glanced and writer guessed,
The letter to his lips he pressed.
The post-man should have hurried by,
But thought he saw in Conrad's eye
A twinkling gleam of glad surprise
And tears unbidden slowly rise,
And thought that in a moment's pause
Perhaps from him to learn the cause,
But found the hope was all in vain,
When Conrad sought his room again.
With nervous hand 'twas soon unsealed;
His father's message was revealed,
And in its ample folds he found
A card with finer texture wound.
With care he op'd the tissue furl—
"Oh! it is sister, precious girl!
"Dear Della, Della, seems it wrong
That I should be from thee so long?
Oh, sister, dear, thy smiling face,
Thy tender heart and winning grace,
Through weary day and sleepless night,
Still haunt me like some fabled sprite.
Not many moons shall wax and wane
Ere I shall be with thee again."

He kissed the picture o'er and o'er
And wept as never wept before,
And in his tears he found relief,
For there's no other balm for grief.

XVIII

He quelled his feelings, dried his tears,
And now into the letter peers.
With calmer nerve and clearer head,
He thus his father's message read:

The Letter.

Dear Conrad Dorn, mine only son,
A few short lines I'll pen to thee,
For still we mourn our absent one
Far, far beyond the cruel sea.
'Twere sad such waters should divide
From us our only hope and stay;
That arm on which we all relied
To cheer our life's uneven way.
At morn we miss thy cheerful face,
At noon, thy counsel wise and brave;
At eve we view thy vacant place,
And all is silent as the grave.
We hope for thee a gen'rous share
Of all that's good and just and free;
May life and health with less of care
Be long vouchsafed to us and thee.
The autumn days are growing chill;

The forest leaves begin to fall ;
The nuts are rip'ning on the hill,
And winds are whistling through the hall.
Thy favorite horse is on the mead,
He does not seem to miss thee now ;
Perhaps 'tis well such noble steed
Cannot like us to sorrow bow.
But Medor still remembers thee,
For when we speak to him thy name,
He barks and whines with ecstasy
And longs to range the veldt for game.
To thee her love thy mother sends
With many prayers combined with tears,
And, though to all-wise Will she bends,
Her heart is filled with doubts and fears.
Thy sister's picture I'll enclose,
(Ah, here she comes to bring it now),
The cheek, you'll see, has less of rose,
With tinge of sadness on the brow.
Dear girl, it seemed she'd die of grief,
When o'er the wave she saw thee start,
And months of time gave poor relief
To her forlorn and broken heart.
But she is not so gloomy now,
She seems more like she used to be,
And oft with smiles her features glow,
But never with their former glee.

Avon O'Kane now often calls
And stays with us to dine or tea,
And from his lips such wisdom falls
He always makes me think of thee.
'Twas months ago, in raiment rude,
A huntsman to our gate he came;
He said that in the mountain wood
His way was lost in search of game.
We bade him spend the night and rest,
And found that 'neath his rude attire,
There lay such heart and manly breast
As all true souls at once admire.
His learning seemed a boon from heaven,
More than from schools and teachers learned,
For such rich speech were scarcely given
By schools, though oft 'tis amply earned.
We kindly bade him often come,
And many pleasant eves he spent,
But, of his station and his home,
It seems, he's always reticent.
With quick evasion, seeming planned,
Each questioner he holds at bay,
And, though we cannot understand,
We always let him have his way.
No doubt he was some Transvaal child
With no small store of manly pride,
On whom dame fortune never smiled,

As thousands more have been beside.
Those questions now we ask no more,
Lest we should fill his heart with pain,
But are content that he's a Boer
And that his name's Avon O'Kane.
And Della, when the day is fair,
Strolls oft with him to Limpopo,
Where she and thou hadst joined in prayer
So many, many days ago.
And there with song and hook and line
Or in her light and tiny boat,
They sit beneath the flow'ring vine
Or on the waves they gently float.
And now, dear son, our prayers sincere
Are still for thee, where'er thou art.
We hope that in the future near
Again to take thee to our heart.
And should thy soul with burden fill
Or in thy absence feel forlorn,
Oh, son, remember I am still
Thy loving father, HORACE DORN.

XIX

Young Conrad rose and paced the room
With aching heart and silent gloom,
And, to dispel, he tried in vain,
The visions that had racked his brain.
A vivid sense of absence wore

A darker hue than e'er before,
And round his soul a feeling clung
That's not expressed by mortal tongue ;
A thousand scenes all crowding came,
Each with some new and scorching flame,
To light the fires within his soul
And place those fires beyond control.
He saw his mother's tear-drops fall,
And heard the gusts within the hall,
And father's low and patient call.
His native home with all its throes,
With all its joys and all its woes,
Before his mental vision rose,
And with each scene, in ev'ry place,
His loving sister's pallid face
With quiv'ring lips and pleading eyes
For his return would always rise.

XX

Again he tries to break the spell,
But its bold shapes refuse to quell,
And, as his last and best retreat,
He strolls upon the busy street
To mingle with the noisy throng,
That like a current drift along.
But here he feels as if alone ;
Each face is cold as marble stone,
And the vast crowds that round him swell

Seem but as walls of hermit's cell.
Back to his room his steps he sped
And threw himself upon his bed,
And dreamless slumbers gently come
And close the visions of his home.

XXI

When he awoke, the day had flown,
And o'er the city night had thrown
Her somber robes of spectral hue,
That stars had marshalled out to view.
The moon, just rising in the east,
Its long, dim shadows faintly cast,
And from each tower and stately dome
Its lines of cold reflection come.
He sits beside his window high
And gazes out upon the sky,
And down upon the restless street,
Which, from its war with 'sieging feet,
Seems half inclined to sound retreat,
And, peering out into the night,
He sees a vivid flick'ring light.
Successions quick of light and dark,
As of some bold electric spark,
Attracted Conrad's watchful eye,
And soon is heard his eager cry:
"It's Morse's code!" he read the flame,
For it was flashing out his name.

"Ah! that is Saris!" Conrad cries,
And still their flash with wonder eyes.
He placed his lamp to Saris' gaze,
And, with his hand before the blaze,
With that same code spelled Saris' name,
Which Saris knew from Conrad came.

XXII

Night after night, across the street,
Their lights, each from his window, meet,
And with their flashes through the air,
They many a friendly message bear.

XXIII

At length a bright and happy thought
Upon the mind of Conrad wrought.
"Two lamps of tiny form," said he,
"One for my sister, one for me,
With light electric and a key,
I'll take with me to Afric's shore,
When these, my exile days, are o'er.
From house to house and bower to bower
We'll often while eve's idlest hour,
And friends will often gather round
In wonder's spell completely bound."

XXIV

Each idle moment now was spent
To learn what plan he would invent,
And many a day of thought he plied

Ere on the form he could decide.
At last his plans were all complete,
And he had formed the lanterns neat,
With light, reflector, key and slide,
And yet so small that they could hide,
Secure from sight of one and all,
In some secluded pocket small,
And to secrete from vulgar eye,
And sister be the first to spy
The product of his care and skill,
He wrapped and placed them in his till.

CHAPTER V.

'Tis evening now on Limpopo ;
The glinting sunbeams come and go,
As white-winged clouds are slowly driven
Like sails, across the face of heaven,
Whose ever-changing forms¹ of light,
From menial slave to gallant Knight
And war-like steeds with loosened rein
Like magic changed to burthened wain,
Transform the heaven's unfathomed arch
To fancied foes' triumphant march.

II

Who has not thus at balmy eve²
Urged childish fancy to deceive
His raptured eye, as long he'd gaze
Upon the changing mystic maze
Of cloudy cohorts, marshaled high,
Majestic on the Western sky?

III

A breeze as soft as Fairy's tread
Is floating now across the stream,

¹This picture only attempts to portray what any boy will notice as he watches the clouds slowly change their shape.

²*Eve*: Eve and evening are used in this connection as in most all others in this poem in the sense of "after-noon."

And breathing in the boughs o'erhead
A song as sweet as angel's dream.
And though that song such measure swells,
As 'twere the chime of distant bells,
Still its deep pathos plainly tells
That this fair stream must soon behold
Far sadder scenes than can be told.

IV

The rain-crow's yelp—ill-omened¹ bird—
Beyond the stream is plainly heard,
As if each tim'rous heart to fill
With warnings of impending ill;
And though we heed its warnings not,
And its shrill tones be soon forgot,
Yet we too soon may find this spot,
Though seeming far removed from fears,
A bower of blasted hopes and tears.

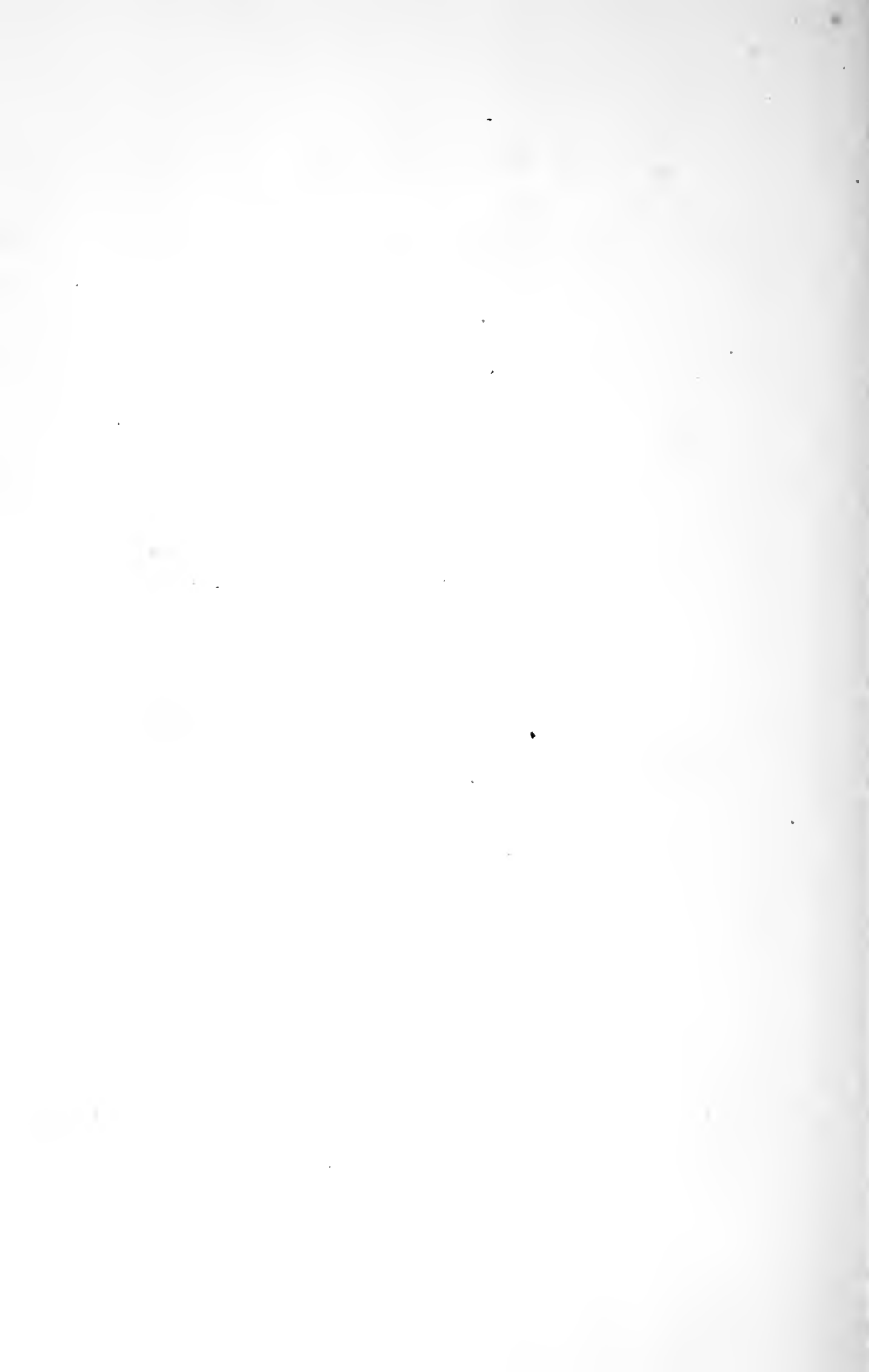
V

The honeysuckle's climbing vine,
Whose closely folding tendrils twine
Around some half-decaying boughs,
As if in them a hope to rouse
Again to live and verdant stand
To shade the flowerets of the land,

¹*Ill omened*: In my boyhood days it was considered an ill omen to hear a rain-crow, probably not further, however, than that of indicating foul weather.



But See! she starts as from a dream,
And quick she stands beside the stream.



Its fragrance spreads upon the air
Of choicest odors rich and rare.

VI

See! yonder, near the water's brink,
Where flow'ring daisies love to drink
The dews, that from the river rise,
As, bound from earth to upper skies,
They pause to bid a last farewell
To flowers that grace the bank and dell,
For there beneath those clustered vines
Beside an oak a maid reclines.
A half impatient wandering plays
O'er her fair features and betrays
A deep suspense, some wish reveals,
Which maiden's art but half conceals,
As o'er the wave she tries in vain
Some fondly cherished glimpse to gain.
But see! she starts as from a dream,
And quick she stands beside the stream,
As, round the bend beyond the cliff,
She spies a light and shining skiff.
Far up the river now she peers,
As down the stream the shallop steers
And in its ever-wid'ning wake
Sunbeams ten thousand sparklets make.
Fast to her cheeks the blushes rise
And glowing beams start from her eyes,

With all the softness of a dove,
Such as are born alone of love.
Around her neck the falling curls
Half hide a band of shining pearls,
And on her brow of snowy white,
Bathed in alternate shade and light,
She wears a simple modest wreath
Of hare-bells gathered from the heath.

VII

What maid is this? Who can it be?
Ah, now she turns and we can see,
By that fair face like blushing morn,
It is the gentle Della Dorn;
For there was never face so fair,
Or such bright curls of auburn hair,
Or eyes so soft as Della's are.

VIII

Why is she here? Why such concern?
Why do her cheeks with ardor burn?
Look thou where sky's sun-crested brow
To stream's soft wave is forced to bow,
Along the bright horizon line,
Where sparkling rays with splendor shine,
And see that gay and silvery boat
On Limpopo so lightly float,
As on the current it is borne
On toward the bower of Della Dorn.

IX

The man who there so proudly stands
With head erect and folded hands
In such gay weed and forward brow
Upon the vessel's silver prow,
Is England's proud and warrior son,
Who, e'en in spite of youth, has won
Some laurels which can never fade,
E'en when beneath the dust he's laid.
His uniform, the Briton's pride,
With the bright broad-sword at his side
And epaulettes of golden folds
Tell of the rank the wearer holds,
While worthy tongues and lips profane
All join to praise Avon O'Kane.
His gentle speech and bearing grand
Have won fair Della's heart and hand,
And, though she knew naught of his rank,
Still she that pleasure always drank,
Which from love's fount alone can flow
And only those who feel can know.

X

He chose to woo her as a youth
Of her own land, and thus the truth,
To her, had always been suppressed
Or in uncertain language dressed.

XI

'Twas yester in this bower they met
To plight their troth and nuptials set,
For though 'twas months since he had come
A weary huntsman to her home,
And long his anxious suit had pressed
With all the power his soul possessed,
She but one day ago complied,
And one day more becomes his bride.
Today he comes in grander guise
To give to her a glad surprise
And to unfold to her the truth,
That he is not a Transvaal youth,
But holds in fee a rich estate
Such as make Britons truly great.

XII

His boat moves proudly o'er the waves,
Propelled by four black Kaffir¹ slaves,
While still he stands upon the prow
With folded arms and radiant brow,
And as his vessel glides along
He sings a happy, cheerful song.

¹*Kaffir*: A cruel savage tribe of Southern Africa whose abodes are in the vicinity of Transvaal.

THE SONG.

“Now swift o’er the wave is my bonny boat gliding,
Bearing me on to that beautiful bower,

Where rests a sweet maiden with heart all confiding,
Waiting approach of this bright, blissful hour.

My soul feels no burden, how changed its condition
Since but tomorrow I’ll wed that fair bride;
Fond hope soon will change to the happiest fruition,

Boundless as ocean and wild as the tide.
The sunshine grows bright and the springtime more tender;
Flow’rs of the forest seem beck’ning me on;
Since love’s consummation naught earthly can hinder,

Midnight to me is as bright as the dawn.
Her heart will o’erflow with surprise and emotion,
When she beholds the high rank she has won;
This sword as a signet will seal her devotion,
Staid as a statue, as fixed as the sun.

Glide swiftly, fair vessel, my lover is sighing,
Long are the moments when pensive the mood,

And soft as the song of the swan that is dying¹

Fall my oar-notes on this 'Queen of the Wood,'
Then row, my dark Kaffirs, thy toil nearly ended,
Gold will reward thee, though double it be,
See, yonder, where sunshine and shadows are
blended,

Stands that fair damsel, she's waiting for me.

XIII

The song is finished, and the breeze
Its echo wafts among the trees,
While ev'ry word new joys impart
To Della's warm and throbbing heart.
Still nears the boat and nearer still,
The dripping oars the waters fill
With ever-wid'ning waves that seem
Like childhood's fast receding dream.
At length a jutting rock is passed,
The vessel, full in view at last,
So near to her retreat has come,
She sees his sword and uniform.
With disappointment Della turns,
And now no more with ardor burns
Her beauteous cheek, nor in her eye
Do former hopes of pleasure lie.
Said she: "My joy was all in vain;

¹The ancients believed that a dying Swan sang a sweet, pathetic song.

I thought it was Avon O'Kane.
'Tis but some idle soldier band,
Who seek to gain with bloody hand
Applause from those too base and low
To feel a pang for human woe.
But see! They're steering past the grot
And soon will land upon this spot,"
And giving one quick, piercing glance,
As 'twere her last, her only chance,
Far up the stream she tries again
To see Avon, but all in vain,
And, fearing longer here to stay,
She thought to haste her homeward way,
And, looking back, she saw the band,
Had almost touched the mossy strand.
Such near approach her fears increased
And ev'ry joyous hope released,
And lent her feet a swifter pace,
Lest that bold ruffian should chase,
But ere cool sense she could reclaim
She heard the soldier call her name.
She stopped and looked with doubtful mood,
Upon the land the soldier stood,
And when he saw her mental strain,
Said: "Della, 'tis Avon O'Kane."
At once she now her steps retrace,
Nor can she chide his kind embrace,

For, though decorum's laws are just,
Her heart had learned Avon to trust.

XIV

"Dear Della, does it seem unkind,
That I should so disturb thy mind
By donning such a gaudy guise,
As to deceive thy lovely eyes?"

XV

"No, no, Avon, say not unkind,
For love could scarce such meaning find,
In those small acts which only tend
The serious themes of life to blend,
But I must own thy plan was meet,¹
For its deception was complete.
But pray, why such expensive weed²
For but such momentary need?
Such costly sword, such rich attire,
In sooth,³ must many pounds require,
And it would seem 'twas dearly paid
All just for me, a Transvaal maid."

XVI

"Dear maid, e'en were it all I had,
If it one moment made thee glad,
I would not rue its price as lost,
Nor deem extravagant its cost;

¹*Meet*: Sufficient.

²*Weed*: Apparel, dress.

³*In sooth*: Truly, certainly.

Nor is it for surprise alone,
That I such rich apparel don,
Nor did it cost a tithe of gold
That now for thee I gladly hold."

XVII

"Avon! to me thy meaning teach;
I do not understand thy speech:
It sounds more like some Eastern Knight,
Whom daring feats gave most delight,
Who, service for his lady love,
Regarded nothing else above.
If not alone for mere surprise
Thou wearest such complete disguise,
Then, pray, Avon, what else beside
Hath tempted thee so well to hide
Beneath a soldier's uniform,
As if to brave the battle's storm?
'Tis true, such gaudy, rich attire
No one could fail at once admire,
But those gay epaulettes of gold,
That warriors in such honor hold,
Before which men are wont to bow,
But ill become such youth as thou.
They should be worn by sterner men,
Who never hope to hear again
A sister's call or mother's prayer,
Or feel for son a father's care.

But thou my own——”

“Hold, maiden, hold;

Glad news for thee must now be told:

And, lest thou in false judgment sit,

And further still thyself commit,

Say thou no more. I'll tell thee all

And by thy judgment stand or fall.

XVIII

“Last eve thy hand wast given, nor sooth

Was it bestowed on Transvaal youth.

The truth from thee hast been concealed,

But now to thee must be revealed,

That he who claims thy noble hand,

Is not a youth of Transvaal land,

For England boasts no prouder son

Than Della Dorn's own dear Avon.

In Britain's name, on many a field

This sword hath caused the foe to yield,

And o'er those hostile lands remote

Her colors now in triumph float,

While o'er her wide and 'nightless' plain¹

All honor's given Avon O'Kane.

My mansions stand on many a hill;

¹*Nightless plain:* Great Britain's possessions are so extensive that before the sun has set on one part, it has risen on another. She therefore boasts of a "Dominion on which the sun never sets."

Uncounted wealth my coffers fill;
Tomorrow thou'lt an heiress be,
For I resign them all to thee."

CHAPTER VI.

Fair Della stood all blanched and pale;
Before his glance he saw her quail,
And to her soft and pleading eyes
He saw the tears like dewdrops rise.
No longer held in his embrace,
She now before him stood apace;
Her eyes were fixed upon the ground;
Those eyes that oft had held him bound.
Her trembling lips and silent tongue,
The soldier's heart like adders stung,
While long he stood with wond'ring eye,
To wait her long-delayed reply.
Oh! silence, thou'rt a wondrous thing,
For thou canst joy or sorrow bring;
To anger's rage the mildest start,
Or melt to tears the stoutest heart.
If given to bless, a balm for woes;
To ban, the worst of all our foes.
The moments thus so long delayed
Like hours upon his patience weighed.
Unable longer to control
Suspense that racked his troubled soul,
And raved like wild beasts in his breast,
He thus the gentle maid addressed:

II

"Sweet maid, I, too, for joy have wept,
For joy too full cannot be kept:
Like sorrow, it must have its vent,
And oft is through same channel sent."

III

"Ah! no, Avon, not joy, but grief,
For which I now would find relief.
I cannot bear to understand
That blood hath stained thy noble hand.
Oh! that thou hadst but told me this,
Ere I had dreamed so much of bliss,
And builded hopes of love so high,
That now, alas! in ruins lie."

IV

"In ruins? Nay, those hopes shall live
Ten thousand joys to thee to give
And, wishes all from thee shall fly,
That wealth or love for thee can buy.
Each morn shall fill with joy thy soul,
And noon shall brim the flowing bowl;
At eve, like birds on ocean's crest,
On downy beds thy form shall rest."

V

"Oh, tempt me not, Avon, I pray;
Love is not made of fashioned clay;
Its mold is formed by purer hand

Than mortals have at their command,
And though, Avon, my love is still
As pure as drops from mountain rill,
Unless thou doff thy martial pride,
I never can become thy bride."

VI

"Deem'st thou me false?——"

"Nay, nay, indeed,
And dear Avon, thou hast no need
To offer argument to prove
That thou hast still thy former love.
'Twas not thy heart that went astray,
But head that held the cruel sway
O'er thy once pure and noble hand,
All steeped in blood of foreign land.
Had but thy sword been used to fight
Against invaders of thy right,
Then well wouldst thou deserve thy fame,
And all the honors of thy name.
But when thy Queen's unjust command
Was given, to seize a foreign land,
And fill with grief the homes of those
Whose weakness, only, made them foes,
Then thou wert recreant to thy God
To wield o'er them the tyrant's rod.
Then tempt me not with offered gold
Or rich estates with thee to hold,

For e'en my raiment and my food
Must never be the price of blood."

VII

"Dost thou, fair maid, remember not
That yester eve upon this spot
Thy heart and hand thou gavest me?
And canst thou now so fickle be?"

VIII

" 'Twas not to thee my hand I gave,
But to a noble Transvaal brave;
But must confess to thee, Avon,
My heart is still, yes, still thine own.
My heart, my love, my very soul
Has passed beyond my will's control,
And here in sorrow now I stand
With naught but *honor, life* and *hand*.
To only three I bow the knee: ,
To God, to country, and to thee,
But first to Him is homage due,
Who first of all my being knew;
Whose powerful hand created worlds,
And into nothingness it hurls;
Who justice metes with weal or woe;
To Him alone my *life* I owe.
My *honor* is my country's meed,

For native land this heart would bleed,
And ev'ry sinew of my frame
Submit to death's consuming flame.
My *hand* alone is left to me,
And God and country both decree
That hand can never be for thee.
'Til thou no longer nurse thy fame,
And meet with spurn Great Britain's claim
To service of thy cruel sword,
'Til then, I cannot keep my word.
Thou art too noble, dear Avon,
To honor claim from British crown;
Too far beneath thy noble soul
Does her base tide of greatness roll;
Her strength alone is in her power,
And God is banished from her door,
For while she prays a soul to save,
She sends a thousand to the grave.
My mother, bred on Erin's soil,
Hath felt the Briton's hand of spoil,
And, though my father's cooler mood
Is loath to raise the boiling flood,
Enough of Celtic blood remains,
Still coursing through these feeble veins,
A Transvaal maiden's life to sate
And feed the fires of British hate.
And, Oh! Avon, it grieves my heart,

That thou hast borne a trait'rous part,
And revel in an empty fame
That should but blush thy cheek with shame."

IX

"Fair one! Thou mak'st my blood run cold:
Whence comes such imputation¹ bold?
My faithful service is my boast,
With pen and tongue and marshaled host.
My England home I've ever loved,
And ne'er to thee have faithless proved."

X

"'Tis not from me nor Britain's cause,
That thou hast undeserved applause:
Well hast thou served the Saxon² hand,
But England's not thy native land:
Thy very name, thy speech, thy face,
Betrays in thee the Celtic race,
And, severed by ten thousand woes,
Thy fathers are the Saxons' foes.
And though, Avon, I love thee still
With all the power of woman's will,
I cannot cast with thee my life,
I cannot be a Briton's wife.

¹*Imputation*: Della charges him in a previous line, of acting a traitorous part. In the next four lines he tries to justify his course by denying faithlessness to both her and England.

²*Saxon*: The term Saxon in this story invariably refers to the English.

For if thou'rt still to Britain wed,
By her caprice a captive led,
My country could not trust thy word
Or hope the succor of thy sword.
An exile I would hapless be
From home and friends and all but thee;
A stranger to my country grown
And thou a traitor to thine own.
And as Port Cullis guards the towers
From hostile foes, external powers,
So, honor shields a Transvaal maid
From those who have their land betrayed.

XI

"Should Britain, with the hope of gain,
Her vessels launch upon the main,
Fair Erin's borders to invade,
Thou know'st her will must be obeyed.
Like some proud statue thou must stand,
Thy cruel vassals to command,
Or, leading on thy murd'rous crew,
Bid them the battle-cry renew,
'Til o'er each valley, hill and wood
Thy hand is drenched with kindred blood.
Oh! give me not that love of fame
That blasts the soul to save a name;
And fires the hand to deadly strife
That values not a brother's life.

XII

"Too well, thou knowest, Avon, too well,
 What hearts in Celtic bosoms dwell,
 Whose ears have heard the timid wave
 That dare not touch the legend grave,¹
 Beneath whose mound the bones are stored
 Of victor o'er Formosion horde.
 By legend dim their ears are trained
 To list how Lady Caesair² reigned
 Before the ancient gopher ark
 Rode o'er the flood of waters dark;
 And Erin's proud king Partholan³
 Whose kinship near to Japhet ran.
 But most of all they love the tales
 How bold Milesius led the Gaels
 That smote Tuatha's silver hand⁴
 And gave the Celts that pleasant land.

¹*Legend grave:* It is an Irish legend that in a decisive battle fought between the kings of the Tuatha and the Firbolgs, the Firbolg king was killed and was buried on the shore of Sligo, and that his grave may still be seen there, nor have the waves ever been known to wash over it. He had previously driven the Formosians from Ireland.

²*Lady Caesair:* This is an Irish queen who is said to have reigned before the deluge.

³*Partholan:* This is a traditional king who was a descendant of Japhet, one of Noah's sons, and reigned soon after the deluge.

⁴*Silver hand:* The Tuatha king lost his hand in the battle in which the Firbolg king was killed, and as the Tuatha were unwilling to be governed by a king, with only one hand, they made him one of silver. He was afterward slain by Milesius, since which the Celts have been the ruling race in Ireland.

More than a hundred warrior kings
Tradition¹ down to history brings,
With all their wars and hopes and loves,
And how the Druids² in their groves,
To Crom,³ around their merry bowls,
Made sacrifice of human souls,
'Til bold Saint Patric⁴—once their slave—
Returned with Christ their souls to save.
That age with Christian fervor glowed;
The land with milk and honey flowed,
And nations far its learning sought,
For 'twas the world's storehouse of thought,
Where thousands came, without expense,⁵
To spread her fame and learning thence.

¹Tradition tells of one hundred and eighteen kings who reigned prior to Historic Ireland.

²*Druids*: The ancient Irish were Fire-worshippers and their priests were called Druids.

³*Crom*: The principal deity of the Irish Fire-worshippers. They probably thought that the home of Crom was in the sun and hence are often called "Sun-worshippers."

⁴*St. Patric*: Ireland's patron Saint. He was born in France in the fifth century. When he was sixteen years of age France was invaded by Nial, an Irish king, and Patric was captured and sold as a slave to an Irish chief, but after seven years he escaped. When he was about forty-three years of age he returned to Ireland and succeeded in converting the entire nation from their idolatrous Fire-worship to that of the Christian religion. St. Patric was a Catholic, and the Irish people, as a nation, have remained loyal to the Faith unto this day.

⁵*Without expense*: Many of the Irish schools were free, not only in the matter of instruction, but in board and lodging as well. Students came from all parts of the world to attend these schools.

XIII

“With patriot sons the land was blest,
Nor even Rome had dared molest,
And they had stoutly held the land
Against Formosa’s roving band.
Her harvest fields and meadows green;
Her lakes and streams of glit’ring sheen;
Her stately domes and castles grand
In great profusion filled the land,
And, like the beams of morn that fall,
Spread sweet contentment over all.

XIV

“But, ah; but ah; thou knowest, Avon,
Those days are now forever gone,
For, though like knights her soldiers fought,
The British sword her ruin wrought,
And her proud hopes that towered so high,
At Britain’s feet were doomed to die.”

XV

“Dear maid, speak not at random wild,
Nor be by fancy’s touch beguiled,
Nor harbor sorrow in thy soul
For deeds so far beyond control.
Thy simple acts will dry no tear,
Nor make their burdens lightly bear;
They’ll never know that thou hast shed
A tear o’er their illustrious dead.”

XVI

" 'Tis not *their* dead, Avon, but *mine*.
And *thou* shouldst feel that they are *thine*,
For we are both of Royal line;
And may I never cease to feel
A thrill at name of the O'Neil,
And thou shouldst suffer endless bane
Shouldst thou forget the name O'Kane.

XVII

"Our sires have stood on many a field
Before the Saxon's glittering shield
To save a freeman's home for thee
On that fair island of the sea.
And though in this, alas! they failed,
And English arms at last prevailed,
Still thou shouldst hold their honored name
Far, far above a Briton's fame.
How canst thou thus betray thy trust,
That only heirloom of their dust,
And hold above thy fathers' blood,
The colors of a British lord?
Could thy ancestors now but know
That they had recreant son as thou,
Their ashes in their graves would groan
And such unfaithful son disown.
My mother's sires were the O'Neil,
And, ere I cease for them to feel

A thrill of patriotic fire,
May I by ruffian hand expire
And draw no more the hated breath
Of faithless maid deserving death.

XVIII

“If thou hast fancy, dear Avon,
Call now its rays thy soul upon,
And view thy former Erin proud,
Whose towers had almost touched the cloud,
Then turn and watch the robber bands
From Britain’s shore, whose wanton hands
Mix native blood with native soil,
And ev’rywhere is death and spoil.
Watch Cromwell’s columns¹ in the street
As, ’neath their base, unhallowed feet,
They tread the holy things of God²
As though they were but basest sod.
Men, women, children, all expire
Beneath the ruffians’ dreadful ire,

¹*Cromwell's Columns:* In 1642 Oliver Cromwell, an English general, with a great army marched into Ireland. In three years he accomplished the complete subjugation of the island. Whenever a city fell into his hands he put to the sword, not only the garrison, but thousands of women and children as well. It is said that at Drogheda five days were spent in murdering the inhabitants after the battle had been gained. Cromwell claimed to carry the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, but although Ireland could not stand before his arms, he was unable to turn them from the Catholic faith.

²*Holy things of God:* Cromwell’s soldiers robbed the churches of their valuables and destroyed such as was of no service to them.

While up and down, on ev'ry side
The pavement is with crimson dyed,
And here and there and all around
Lie bleeding patriots on the ground.
Wild screams, the tragic scenes renew,
Of women pierced with saber through,
And cries of helpless babes, as oft
On bayonets the're held aloft,
While maidens with expiring breath,
Must suffer pangs far worse than death.

XIX

"Oh, for the hand of Red O'Neil,¹
And brave Tyrone, whose stubborn steel
Had vengeance full on Saxon wrought,
On many a field of battle fought,
And blood, for blood of fathers' shed
To save the honor of their dead;
And to their children—you and me,
Secure a land from tyrants free.
Those heroes, on the battle plain,
A thousand British would have slain,
Which might have turned the British hand
And saved the Celts their sacred land.
But, ah! those braves—the Saxons' dread,
Were numbered with their honored dead,

¹Red O'Neil and Tyrone were celebrated Irish warriors.

No more to deal their foes the sword
Or shout to friends, commanding word.

XX

“O’More, O’Connell and O’Byrne
Had served their country each in turn,
And each had laid his life and blood
On altar of his country’s good,
And thousands more as true and brave
Had filled a soldier’s honored grave,
But all their struggles now were o’er,
And Emerald Isle was free no more.
Now useless hung their idle swords:
Their lands¹ had passed to British lords,
For even their own beloved soil
Was reckoned now among the spoil.
See, thou, the babe, the youth, the old,
As from their pleasant homes they strolled,
Dejected, naked, hungry, cold,
Poor exiles from their native bower,
Sad victims² of a tyrant’s power.”

¹The lands of the conquered Irish were confiscated and parceled out to British nobles and warriors.

²The rich and noble Irish families as well as the poor ones were dispossessed and driven southwest into the bleak territory of Connaught. The journey subjected them to untold sufferings while their destination offered but little better condition.

XXI

“Sweet maid, those days were days of old,
And years on years since then have rolled
That gloomy curtain’s bloody fold
From o’er our sires’ beloved land,
And stayed oppression’s wanton hand.
No longer now the cave and den
Hide women sad and wretched men,
Or hear the moans and wailing cries
Of war-begotten miseries.
No longer driv’n a wretched band
With hopeless aim, from native land,
They now traverse the island free,
Unfettered by unjust decree,
Where long the land hath sheltered lain
Beneath Victoria’s peaceful reign.”

XXII

“Peaceful, indeed! there is no peace,
Save that which finds, in death, release
From sight of blood and constant broil,
And ravages of sacred soil.
No land may boast a peaceful rest,
That English foot hath ever prest,
And strong the nation that can hold
Its land ’gainst Britain’s thirst for gold.
Ask Burmah’s maids, whose brothers sleep
In patriots graves—ask why they weep:

From Himalaya's snowy head,
Look thou o'er many a Southern mead,
The wreckful path of Britain's tread,
Where o'er fair India's matchless plain,
Lies, countless, her unjustly slain.
And even, Avon, in thine own land,
Thy brothers oft, with sword in hand,
Have tried, though efforts were in vain,
To break th' oppressor's galling chain;
For though they serve the British Crown,
They cannot—dare not—claim their own.

XXIII

“And, dear Avon, thou knowest too well
What mean the bugle notes that swell
With such gay cadence on our breeze,
While hostile fleets are on the seas.
Even now, Avon, at this sad hour,
Thou knowest there stands a sullen Power,
Whose vassals chafe the time delayed,
When some light pretense shall be made
For war on Transvaal's peaceful shores,
The land their treaty gave the Boers.

XXIV

“Oh, dear Avon, should Britain come
To desecrate our sacred home,
How couldst thou bear the band to lead,
Which fiercer grows when patriots bleed,



And here among these timid flowers,
Where we have spent such blissful hours,
Find this dear spot, where oft we've stood,
All covered with our brothers' blood?
How canst thou find consent to reap
Fresh laurels, while our maidens weep,
And wring from us with bloody swords
To deck the homes of British lords?
Oh, how canst thou so cruel be
To this dear home that shelters me?"

XXV

The soldier stood with fallen crest,
While sighs disturbed his manly breast;
A thousand visions, each a dart,
Came crowding round his wretched heart,
And bade a timid tear-drop start:
His troubled thoughts were tempest-tossed
Like ships at sea with rudder lost,
With but one isle that promised good,
And that *fair isle* before him stood.
He gazed upon the charming maid,
While love and pride alternate swayed
His wavering heart, as stubborn trees
Are bowed before the fitful breeze.
She silent stood—she knew not why,
He, pondering what he should reply,
For yet debate was in his mind

If pride or love should be resigned.
His sword had seen the foemen yield
By thousands on the battlefield,
And his command to come or go,
(Obeyed alike by friend and foe),
A power so oft by him displayed
Could not subdue one gentle maid;
For here his sword was his distress,
And words were just as powerless.

XXVI

"Fair maid," at length the soldier said,
And proudly raised his drooping head,
"Fair maid, thy words are words of truth:
Oh, that I were a Transvaal youth:
Thou'rt worthy of the noblest lord
That e'er hath wielded pen or sword.
If aught beneath the earth or sky
Should change my purpose proud and high,
Or bid my hope of honor pause
'Til I should join with weaker cause,
Unless they were resigned for thee,
I'd deem it basest perfidy.
But, ah, dear maid, where'er I turn,
I view those hopes of honor burn,
Whose incandescent rays of light
Point up to future glory's height,
Where wealth and power and honored name

Unite in permanence of fame:
Then thou'lt forgive me, if I pause
To ponder what the course or cause,
Thy life and mine to better bless,
Or bring us surest happiness.
If I am true to England's crown,
I've wealth and honor and renown;
And if my lot is cast with thee,
Then thou alone art left to me.

XXVII

Tomorrow, by this river's side
We'll meet again at eventide,
While still yon sinking sun's bright gleam
Is high above this sacred stream.
And, oh! dear Della, may thy mind
A course less unrelenting find,
And, touched by ties which fate hath planned,
Grant me both honor and thy hand:
Or, if my dreams of honor fade,
Then I'll return to thee, dear maid,
And all shall be as thou hast said;
But, if in purpose both are fast,
Each then may know 'the die is cast:'
Our fondest hope will then be o'er,
And we, sweet maid, will meet no more,
But try to learn, if fate will let,

XXVIII

Each other's fondness to forget."
"Avon, 'tis well," replied the maid,
"Thy mandate just will be obeyed;
Here, near my home, my native cot,
We'll meet upon this sacred spot,
Where oft we've lingered by this stream,
And even dared of love to dream,
While hope for future years of bliss
Seemed all the soul could ask in this.
But, dear Avon, thy hope is vain,
That we may shun sad mem'ry's pain,
For blighted love brings most regret
And sets a seal we can't forget."

XXIX

Into his boat the soldier sprung
While his gay trappings loudly rung
With sounds which once he loved to hear,
But now, seemed dirges on his ear.
A quiet look, a modest wave
Now summoned forth each willing slave;
Each plied his long and stubborn oar,
And soon the boat had left the shore.
Again he stands upon the prow,
But, with a sadder heart and brow,
And, though the tears his vision blind,
He dares not cast a look behind.

His love is battling with his pride
And one more night must now decide
If Britain's crown with bloody blade
Be stronger than a Transvaal maid.
If thou one glance, Avon, would'st cast,
(Oh, look! oh, look! ere time is past),
To her who kneels in agony
With tearful prayer to God for thee,
Thy stubborn heart would drown in tears,
And happier be thy coming years.
But, no; ah, no; thou wilt not look,
Thou knowest such scenes thou couldst not brook,
But thou art bart'ring wealth untold
For British fame and sordid gold.

CHAPTER VII.

Low sank the sun on Limpopo;
The stream's sad murmurings soft and low,
As on fair Della's ear they fell,
Seemed tollings of a funeral knell,
And faded, drooping, lifeless now,
The wreath of harebells on her brow.

Her pallid face and features cold
Bore aspect, grave as marble mold,
While dimmed with weeping were the eyes,
Which once Avon had deemed a prize.
The length'ning shadows on the wave,
Like "Weeping Willows" o'er the grave
Of some beloved, departed friend,
A solemn sadness seemed to lend,
While in her ear, a cooing dove
Poured its sad tale of blighted love.

II

Long, up the stream, she sadly gazed,
Where setting sun and billows blazed,
To watch the fast departing skiff
Pass from her view around the cliff.
Once she had thought she saw it turn;

Once more allowed a hope to burn
That he might ponder on his course,
And back to her bring his remorse;
But no, 'twas but delusive thought,
Born of a wish, by fancy brought,
For while she watched the oars descend,
His vessel passed beyond the bend.
In silent sadness Della stood,
With breaking heart, though unsubdued,
And meekly, humbly kneeling there,
Poured out her soul again in prayer
To God, for wisdom and for power,
To meet the morrow's trying hour.
She prayed forgiveness for the maid
Who may in folly's path have strayed,
And for the guidance of His hand
To serve her own beloved land.
She begged His constant heavenly care,
For brave O'Kane, unstinted share,
That he be led to choose aright
By counsel with the coming night;
And when she rose, heard seeming song
Of angels whispering: "Be thou strong."
Behind the hilltops of the west
The sun had gently sunk to rest,
And twilight's weird and solemn hour
Was settling o'er that sacred bower.

She heard her mother call her name;
With heavy heart the maiden came
And slower step and sadder brow,
Than e'er had been her wont 'til now.
Her pallid face, her manner shy,
Caught now her mother's watchful eye,
Who quickly sought the cause to know
For such apparent mental woe.
She clasped her mother in embrace;
The tears were streaming down her face;
"Oh, mother, let thy counsel kind
Aid me to fix my heart and mind,
And help by thy advice to roll
This crushing burden from my soul."

III

"Speak, daughter, speak, thy troubles tell,
Nor matters what hast thee befell,
Oh, dear, dear Della, thou shalt see
Thou hast a mother's sympathy.
With all the powers which I possess
I've labored for thy happiness,
And cares 'neath which thy heart must groan,
With equal weight depress my own,
For, though 'tis safe to trust but few,
A mother's heart is always true."

IV

"Oh, mother, dear, I know thou'rt kind ;
None could I hope more true to find,
For none beneath the heavens possess
A mother's love and tenderness.
Not much that's earthly have I seen ;
This home, a heaven to me hath been,
Nor have I ever known 'til now,
What anguish may becloud the brow.
Were all the world at my command,
'Twere gladly given to free one hand
From guilt of blood and British land."
"Thy hand?——"

"Nay, mother, but Avon,
Whom thou hast cherished as a son ;
From whom such words of wisdom fell ;
Upon whose songs we loved to dwell ;
Whose ev'ry thought seemed newly mined
From wisdom's mountain and refined ;
Whose playful mood and winning ways
Have cheered dear Conrad's absent days,
And whom we thought so true and brave
Is but a soldier—Britain's slave.

V

"His sword hath won both wealth and fame,
And Britain honors well his name,
For 'twas by him that Burmah's plain,

Fell such sad prey to British reign.
Oh, could he but consent to come
And o'er our hills contented roam,
No more to lead a soldier's life,
'Twere highest bliss to be his wife.
But, ah, his heart is on his name,
His love of praise and hope of fame,
And but consents that I may share
His wealth, his love and glory there.
Tomorrow eve, on yonder shore,
We meet—perhaps to meet no more,
For, 'then,' said he, 'if both are fast,
'Twill all be o'er—the die is cast.'
Dear mother, may thy wisdom guide
And aid my wavering heart, decide
If I should be a foeman's bride,
For love is not with reason fraught,
Nor holds the rein of sober thought."

VI

"Dear Della, it were grief to me
For thou a Briton's wife to be,
But thou hast been a duteous child,
To parents' wishes reconciled,
And thy sweet lays from day to day
Have chased a thousand glooms away;
But since thou hast to woman grown
The right of choice is all thine own.

For kindred ties too narrow span
Where love has thrown her talisman.
Ask thou thy heart if happier life
Were thine, when thou'rt a Briton's wife,
And, be thy choice whate'er it will,
I'll love thee, yes, I'll love thee still."

VII

With sober mood the father came;
His words of comfort were the same:
He placed his hand upon her head
And in his tenderest accents said:
"Dear child, thy life hast been to me
All that a daughter's life could be;
Thou wast my joy when fortune blest,
My source of comfort when distress:
When fever wracked, the Angel thou
That cooled my scorched and aching brow.
And now, dear Della, thou'lt decide,
Nor fear that we shall ever chide,
For though 'twere joy to be with thee,
Our love will reach thee o'er the sea."

VIII

The maiden sought her lonely room,
O'er which there seemed to rest a gloom
As deep as that of haunted tomb,
For night a strange enchantment throws
Around, when sorrow seeks repose.

She silent sat, her window nigh,
And gazed upon the evening sky,
Whose clouds in many-colored dress
Seemed only mocking her distress.
The birds had sought the leafy trees
And quiet lay the evening breeze,
While here and there came rays of light
From starry watchers of the night.
Long, long she sat, but silent thought
No more of fixed decision brought,
For ne'er before had she been left,
Of even a parent's counsel reft.
"Oh, that dear Conrad could be here
This lonely, lonely hour to cheer,
And with his gentle words impart
Some solace to this breaking heart,
But, ah; ten thousand miles between
Us, of sad ocean intervene.
Oh, how can I, alone, decide
Between Avon and country's pride?
For I must aid my nation's bane,
Or see his face but once again.
His lordly fame and rich estate
Attract me not, but gender hate,
For though his heart is true and good,
His wealth is priced with human blood.
Tomorrow's answer must decide

If I must be a Briton's bride,
Or yield, through life, my heart and hand,
A martyr to my native land.
But, oh, dear Land, well canst thou trust
Thy maid, 'til she return to dust,
Nor future pen, whate'er befall,
Record her faithless to Transvaal."

IX

With throbbing heart and aching head
The maiden sought her lonely bed,
But sleep and rest alike were fled,
For though her heart was firmly set,
There lingered o'er her spirit yet
A hope that brave O'Kane would find
Full cause to change his wayward mind.
When Morning woke from his repose,
She, from her sleepless pillow rose,
And while the evening sun was high,
And winds were sweeping gayly by,
With trembling, measured step and slow
She sought the bank of Limpopo.
Again she sat beneath the flowers,
Where she had spent such blissful hours,
When two young hearts with love entwined
Had naught but future joy divined.
But, ah, how changed her features now!
What pallid face and mournful brow!

Those eyes that once with joy were bright,
Are victims now of sorrow's blight.
With constant watch the wave she scanned,
As far as view she could command,
With hope that soon Avon O'Kane
Would pass the river's bend again.
Slow beats her heart, the moments roll
Like sluggish tides across her soul,
For even the stream, that faithful friend,
Cannot one thrill of solace lend.

X

Her vigils all were kept in vain,
For that dear form came not again;
And when the sun had fallen low,
And day had lost its lustre's glow,
Those melancholy hours, which bind
Such mournful mem'ries to the mind
With cruel weight of added care,
Seemed greater than her soul could bear.

XI

"Oh, why not come once more, Avon,
To soothe the heart which thou hast won?
How can I bear to think that thou
Canst leave me thus to sorrow now?
Hast thou been false? that cannot be,
For thou hast been too kind to me:
Thy soul itself would feel the smart,

If thou should'st wound a maiden's heart.
Oh, that we could but meet once more,
Nor would I now thy course deplore,
But only ask, in future years
When thou art gay and I in tears,
That thou, Avon, would'st not forget
That there is one who loves thee yet."

XII

She views the eve's declining sun;
Another day is nearly done;
The stars again will deck the skies,
And winds will calm to gentle sighs:
The birds again upon the nest
Will chirp their little ones to rest,
And flowers their velvet petals fold
To shield from night's benumbing cold.
But, ah, dear maid, thou loveliest flower
That decks thy loved, thy sacred bower,
Far sadder will thy moments be,
For night no guerdon brings for thee.

XIII

Long on the prow the soldier stood
And gazed upon the bank and wood
With void, subdued and vacant stare,
But felt no sense of beauty there.
His thoughts were not upon the wave
Or bank or wood or passing cave,

For there was rising in his soul
A feeling he could not control.
The future was to him as dark
As the black slaves that rowed his bark,
For ne'er had seemed so fair 'til now
Sweet Della's sorrow-stricken brow.
He felt the justice of her cause;
Her sad appeal had bade him pause,
For 'twas his hand that gave the blow
That laid her hopes of future low.
He almost wished he had obeyed
The pleading tones of that dear maid,
For such a brave and lovely bride
Were greater wealth than all beside.

XIV

When love and pride in conflict meet,
Pride suffers oft a sore defeat;
Equipped for strife upon the field,
Pride boasts a spear, love bears a shield:
The shaft of power Pride madly thrusts
And in his strength alone he trusts;
Around Love's head his missiles fly,
But at her feet they broken lie,
For she with simple, modest art
Protects her only home—the heart.

XV

The bending oars in concert rang ;
The stream its softest murmurs sang,
Which only served to closer bind
The chains of sadness round his mind,
For all he loved was left behind.
As more and more he pensive grew,
His pictured life he darker drew,
And future's lonely solitude
Like dismal sprites before him stood.
Fast up the stream his Kaffirs rowed
To reach the camp—Avon's abode,
Where ready stood the soldiers gay
His slightest summons to obey.
The darker shades of coming night
Had chased the day's last beams of light,
And cold nocturnal stillness spread
O'er stream and wood and mountain-head.
So quiet lay the world, and still,
He almost feared some penal ill,
Some monstrous form, would sudden rise,
Whose deathly mien and haggard eyes
Would pierce his soul with agony,—
His just reward for perfidy.
He watched the dancing bubbles float
Upon the water by the boat,
And almost envied them the hour

When they would reach that lovely bower,
And vainly wished that they could bear
A message to the loved one there,
For deep remorse had touched his heart
And caused a sudden tear to start.
He spoke aloud the maiden's name,
And sobs convulsed his manly frame;
And while the Kaffirs heard his groans,
Words took the place of sorrow's moans:

XVI

"Oh, heaven forgive the sinful hour
That gave me thirst for fame and power,
And steeled my soul to wrack with pain
A maiden's heart 'twere wealth to gain.
Tomorrow, by this sacred stream,
Again we'll 'dare of love to dream:'
May penitence my wrongs atone,
And Della Dorn be still my own.
The future is a dreary waste
On which the lives of all are cast,
And when but one oasis stands
Amid the waste of scorching sands,
'Twere better far that spot to gain
Than long for sands of all the plain.
Tomorrow eve I'll meet the maid
In simpler style and dress arrayed,

And give to her my honor's word
To serve no more a British lord."

XVII

The boat still gliding o'er the wave,
Passed many a bower and hollow cave,
And when high up the eastern sky
The boatmen cast a weary eye
And spied above the hills and trees
Orion¹ chase the Plieades,
Avon beheld a light on shore,
And bade his Kaffirs slack the oar,
And soon is heard the sentry's tramp
Around the British soldier's camp,
And when his boat had touched the land,
His soldiers close around him stand,
Each with a loud and piercing yell,
Expressing joy words cannot tell.

XVIII

They mark his sober, thoughtful mien,
For such in him was seldom seen,
And much they feared and wondered still
If their commander chief was ill.

¹*Orion*: This is a bright star, which in the early part of October rises soon after sunset. According to mythology, the Pleiades, or Seven Stars, are seven maidens whom Orion is constantly chasing through the heavens. As the transactions here recorded are supposed to have taken place about the 11th or 12th of October, it must have been ten or eleven o'clock at night when O'Kane reached his camp, as the slaves saw Orion "above the hills and trees."

He passed their questions lightly by,
But his unwonted,¹ solemn eye,
His rueful look and fallen crest
And absence of accustomed jest
Betrayed the burden of his breast.
With haste he took his evening meal,
Nor hunger's relish seemed to feel,
And feigning weariness of limb,
(Pretense before unknown in him),
A kind "Good-night" to all he gave,
And took a lantern from his slave
To light him to his martial tent,
Where night would be in silence spent,
And soon upon his lonely bed
O'Kane had laid his aching head.
The wakeful hours roll slowly by,
Nor are the warrior's eyelids dry,
For in his solitude appears
A pang that ope's the fount of tears
Such as would teach the stern to know
What depths belong to mental woe.
He felt the anguish he had laid
Upon the heart of that dear maid,
And ill could bide the time to go
And ask her pardon for the blow.

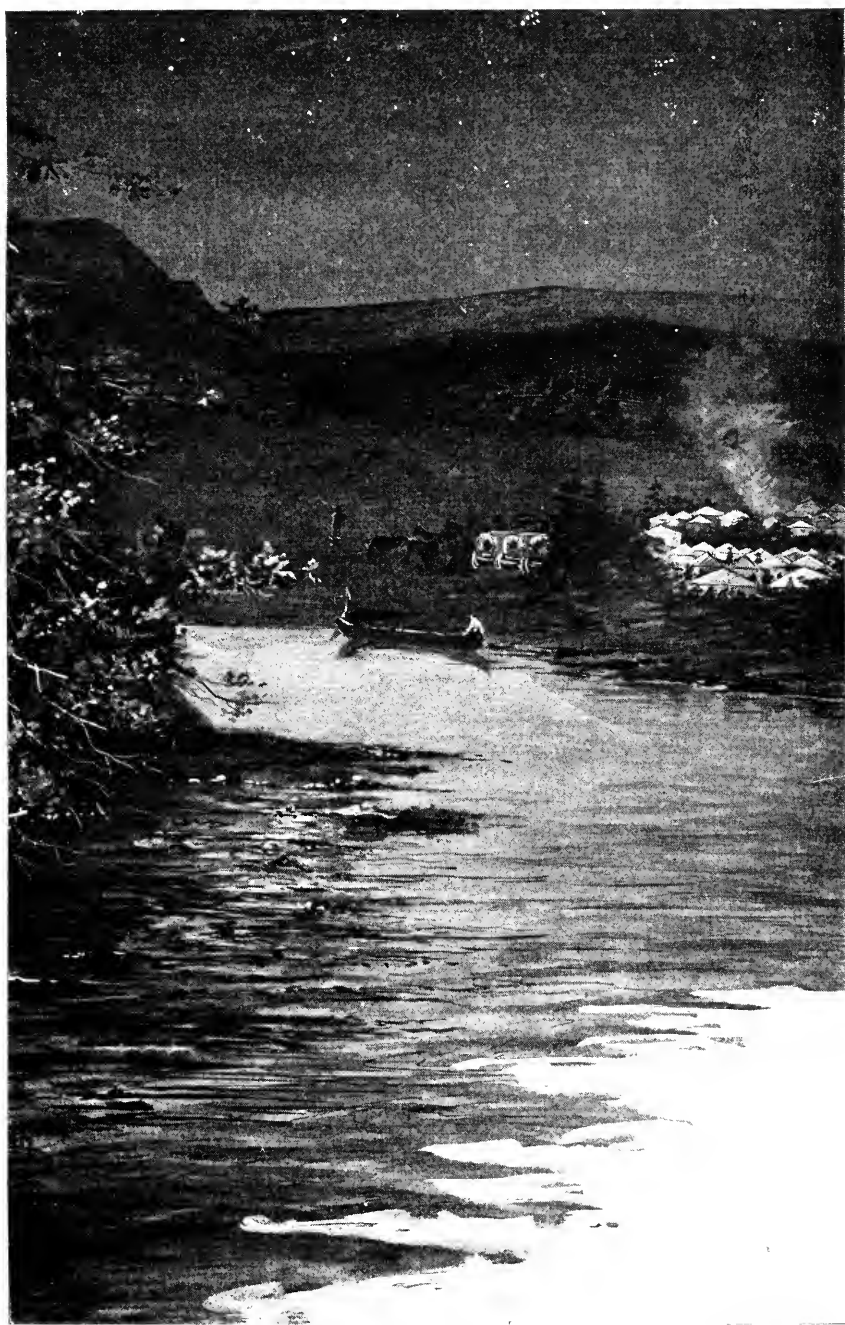
¹*Unwonted*: Unaccustomed.

XIX

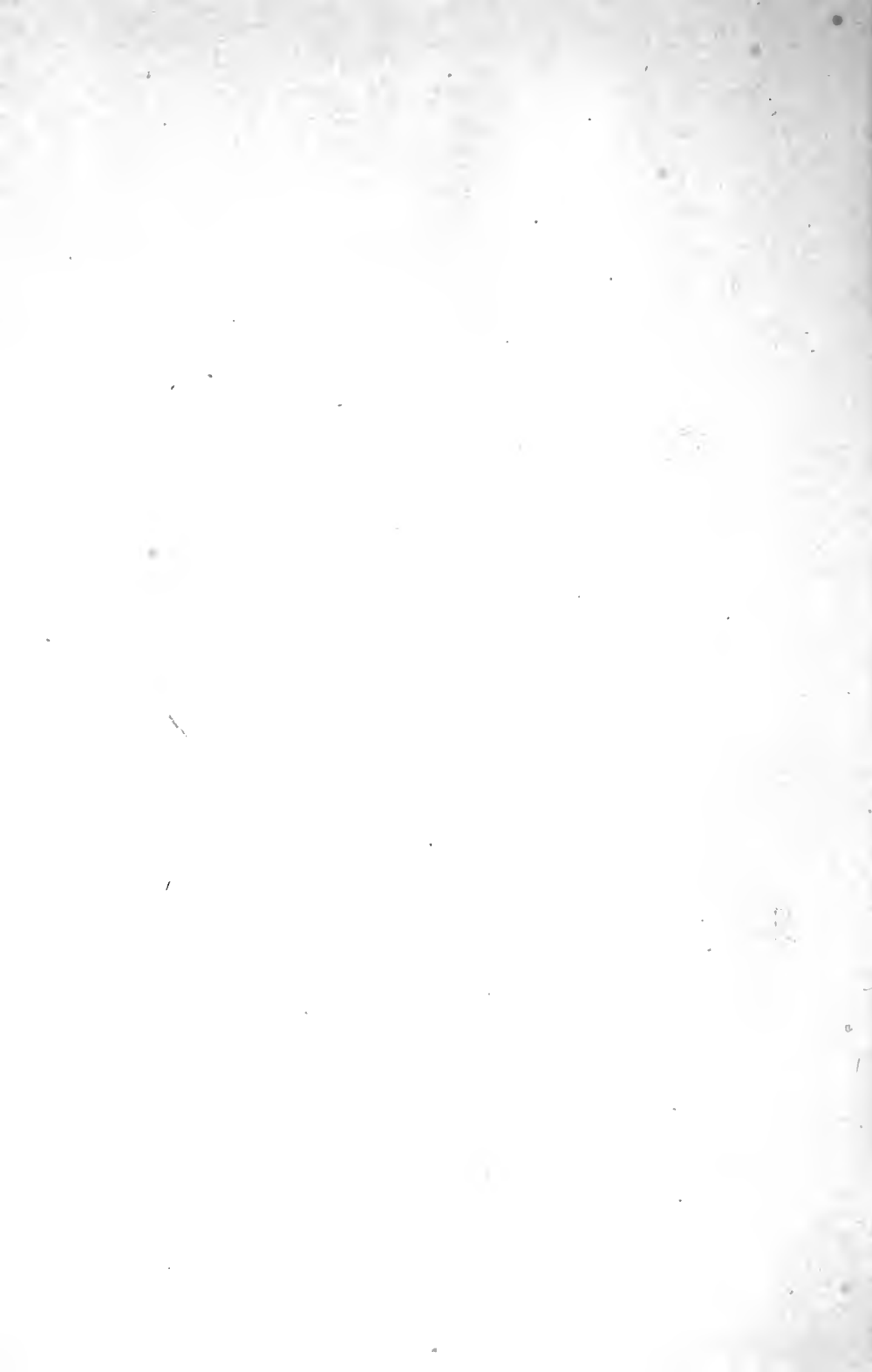
"Tomorrow eve," said he, "my boat
Down Limpopo again will float,
And as we sit beneath the flowers,
And former joys again be ours,
I'll pledge to her my life and love,
And never more from her will rove;
Then will I seek Great Britain's lord,
Resign to him my rank and sword,
And sigh no more for warrior's name,
Nor ask again a Briton's fame,
For this my final night shall be
Beneath a soldier's canopy."

XX

The guards have sung their "all is well;"
The midnight hour their drawlings tell;
The camp is still, no watchful eyes
Are out to view the starry skies
Except the guards', whose dreary rounds
Keep vigils o'er the laager grounds,
And even O'Kane with sleep is blessed,
For he has sunk to dreamful rest.
But ah, fond soul, not long canst thou
With peaceful slumber shield thy brow,
For ere again the rising sun
Shall spread his rays the hills upon
Thy heart will meet a deadly blast



The courser rounds the distant hill
So near he comes and nearer still
That e'en the stars give ample light
To trace the form upon the height.



Severer still than thou hast passed.
Oh, may thy sleep prepare thy soul
To stem the tide so soon to roll
Between thee and thy cherished goal.

XXI

Could'st thou but hear the signal yell
Of courier flying through the dell,
The sounding hoof o'er hill and mead,
And see the foaming, panting steed,
As down the mountain side he flies
And rocks and streams alike defies,
The sight would chill thy very brain
And freeze the blood in ev'ry vein.
Awake! Avon, Oh, Heaven! Awake!!
Prepare thy strongest chains to break,
Nor let thyself, thus unawares,
Be led to slight a maiden's prayers.

XXII

The courser rounds the distant hill;
So near he comes and nearer still,
That even the stars give ample light
To trace the form upon the height.
On, on the flying charger bounds;
The guards have caught the thund'ring sounds,
And eager watch the flying form
Approach the camp like mountain storm.
The outmost sentinel is pas't,

The courier's long, loud bugle-blast
On ears of dreaming soldiers fall,
And spreads confusion over all.
With glit'ring spurs and clanking sword
Through camp he spreads the dismal word:
"To war! To war!! Let time be brief:
Show me Avon O'Kane, the Chief."
Full fifty men their bodies bent
To point him to the lonely tent,
Where brave O'Kane in slumber lay
With rapturous dreams of coming day.

XXIII

His soul was glad, for in his dream
His boat again swept down the stream,
While his black slaves some carol sung,
Or stories told in Kaffir tongue.
He thought the flowers had raised their head
Which had but yester seemed so dead,
And caves which had been dark as night
Seemed radiant now with heavenly light.
He thought his boat had passed the grot,
And now had neared the sacred spot,
Where Della Dorn in days gone by
Had loved to gaze upon the sky,
And with her soft and tender eyes
Had made her bower his paradise.
Again he saw her by the stream,

(Oh, blessed sleep, celestial dream!)
But ere the boat had touched the land
He heard the courier's harsh command.
With sudden start Avon awoke;
The dream is gone, the vision broke,
And while dim thought his senses pall,
He hears the courier loudly call:
"Up! up! O'Kane, put on thy sword,
I bring to thee our Chieftain's word:
E'en now has Transvaal war begun,
And quickly thou must hasten on,
For ere the morning's sun shall spread
His beams o'er yon gray mountain-head,
This honored troop of Britons gay
Must long have been upon their way.
But why such laggard step, and slow?
A Briton thou, and loath to go?
A Warrior Chief, and canst not bear
The sight of blood or maiden's tear?"

XXIV

Ah! sad Avon, if all the powers
Were culled from life's most bitter hours,
To make the sum of human ills,
Such sum this hour but poorly fills.
Too long, too long hast thou delayed
Thy choice of fame or priceless maid;
Thou canst not now thy sword resign,

For even thy band would then combine
To punish thee by martial laws
As a deserter of thy cause.

XXV

Avon the courier's letter took,
And as he read, emotion shook
His ev'ry limb; the rising tear,
Construed by some as sign of fear,
Betrayed a heart too soft by far
To lead the cruelties of war.
His bugle horn he took at last,
And gave a long but feeble blast,
His band to summon from their bed,
For all his dreamish hopes had fled.
Were countless worlds at his command
He'd give them all to leave the band,
But he must face a life of dread
For all his hopes of choice are dead.
Oh, that the maid could view him now
To pardon his unfaithful vow
To meet her where the breezes blow
Their softest chimes o'er Limpopo.
But, ah, dear maid, such wish is vain,
For thou wilt never sit again
With him beneath that sacred vine
Or know the joys which once were thine.

XXVI

With trembling voice he gave command
To summon out his warrior band,
Then one long parting look he gave
To Limpopo's dear sacred wave,
And ere the sun had risen again
He led his band across the plain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cursed be the power whose brutal might
Invades a land's inherent right,
And o'er its country casts a blight
Of blood and tears and hopeless woe,
And wrecks a land to gain its gold
Regardless though the parents old
And children, forced into the cold,
Must suffer tortures from the blow.
When *men* the laws of justice break
And lives of fellow-mortals take,
Their doom, the scaffold or the stake,
Or prison's cold and dreary bar;
While NATIONS loot a neighboring plain
As pirates seize ill-gotten gain,
And glory in the number slain,
But call that greater crime a "war."

II

Upon Pretoria's¹ breathless streets
No mirthful face the watcher meets,

¹*Pretoria:* This is the capital of the Transvaal. An attempt is here made to describe the effect of England's message in this city. Every one knew, almost to a certainty that Queen Victoria's message, which was to be delivered to the Transvaal in the afternoon of October 11th, 1899, would be a signal for war, and hence the gloomy sorrow which hung over their beloved city was intense.

As o'er the pavement burghers¹ tread
As though they walked above the dead.
Their words subdued to whisp'ring sighs
Match well the sadness of their eyes,
And give this city of Transvaal
An air of its own funeral.
The rising sun's faint, sullen rays,
Half-hid behind the morning haze,
Can scarcely meet the anxious gaze
Of those who stare—they know not why—
Along the border of the sky.
The birds have hushed their merry song;
The wind that lately swept along
Has sunk to such a gentle breeze
As scarce disturbs the leafy trees,
And children join no more in play
Or sing their merry childish lay,
But sadly gather round and trace
The signs of grief in father's face,
And wond'ring, ask each other why
The teardrop starts from mother's eye.
The babe held close to mother's breast

¹*Burgher*: A citizen. The term was employed in South Africa to distinguish the original colonists from the immigrants. The latter were called Uitlanders. In this story, the term "burgher" is used to distinguish the Boers from their British foes. It therefore includes all, both burghers and Uitlanders, who aided the Transvaal cause. There were many Uitlanders, even some British, who fought in the Boer army.

Is with unwonted care cares't,
While fathers gaze upon their sons
And fancy them before the guns
Of an unjust and cruel band,
Contending for their native land,
Preferring, rather than be found
By the oppressor's shackles bound,
To fall, perchance, with mortal wound.

III

The nation groans in deep suspense,
With ready hand for its defense
And listening ear for sounds afar,
It fears will bring the notes of war.
But there is one who, more than all,
Will feel the dreaded message fall,
In whom the cares of all are blent;
It is the nation's President.¹
With heavy heart Paul Kruger sits,

¹Paul Kruger was president of the Transvaal Republic. It is said that he was a man of limited education, but of great natural ability. He foresaw the British storm which threatened to sweep over his beloved country and tried to avert it by making concessions which were even humiliating to his proud spirit, but all to no purpose. England had determined upon the spoliation of the little Republic and did not propose to be turned from her purpose by concessions, however, great—not even by her own promises.

With Wolmarans¹ and Doctor Reitz,
In the Republic's Council-Room,
O'er which there hangs a fateful gloom,
To wait the message from the Queen,
Sent by her agent—William Green.
The sun has reached the hour of noon;
Great joy must come, or sorrow, soon,
For ere the coming night shall throw
Its shadows o'er the day's faint glow,
Great Britain's Queen her peace will send,
Or with a word the nation rend.

IV

An hour has passed, the clock strikes "one,"
The day's suspense is nearly done,
For soon will come Great Britain's word
To glad the heart or wake the sword.
Oh! that I could with language trace
The anguish written on the face
Of him who soon must feel the roll
Of war's harsh drum upon his soul,
And view with sad and tender eyes
His own dear country ere it dies.

¹*Wolmarans*: Major Wolmarans was a member of the Executive Council and Dr. Reitz was secretary of state. These two, with President Kruger, were seated in the council room when William Conyngham Green, the British agent, arrived bearing the Queen's message which was to put an end to all further negotiations. This meeting is fully explained in the text.

V

In tones subdued the three converse,
And all their nation's ills rehearse,
And vainly hope from British hand
A bloodless peace to bless the land.
"Ah, Reitz," said Kruger, "think how long
Our land has suffered British wrong.
Think how our fathers at the Cape,
Long tried our destiny to shape,
And strove to win, by constant toil,
For us the freedom of the soil,
Where we, their children, should be free
From ev'ry form of tyranny.
Think how the British seized the land,
And ruled the Boers with 'iron hand,'
Forbidding e'en their mother tongue
Into the courts of justice brung.
They seized their cities, towns and lands,
Exposed them to the native bands
Of Kaffir tribes which round them dwelt,
Whose hordes no sense of mercy felt,
But gloried most in taking life,
Not sparing e'en the child or wife.
Such were the sorrows of our race,
And such the foes they had to face
Upon the soil which they had prayed
Might be a home their toil had made.

VI

"They fled from their beloved soil,
 Resigned it all to British spoil,
 And northward¹ pressed their dangerous way,
 Harrassed by natives night and day,
 Preferring o'er the veldt² to trek,³
 Than see upon their offsprings' neck
 The yoke of British bondage placed,
 And thus with country be disgraced.
 Nor think their troubles then were done,
 Ah, no, the worst had just begun,
 For, scarce of arms from British loot,⁴
 'Twas hard with natives to dispute
 The right of passage o'er the plain,
 To reach the land they hoped to gain.

¹*Northward*: This has reference to the first great trek or movement northward from Cape Colony when the British had taken that country from the Boers.

²*Veldt*: The great plains of South Africa are called "veldts." The term probably corresponds to the term "prairie" of the United States of America.

³*Trek*: To move out, to emigrate. The term is also used when an army is vanquished and retreats to some distant point, or if an army is victorious and then moves across the country to attack some other distant point it is said to "trek."

⁴*Loot*: Plunder. This term is here used in a restricted sense. When the English seized Cape Colony, the first African country which the Boers had settled, their rule over the colonists was so intolerant and unbearable that hundreds of Boer families determined to trek northward and settle a new country in order to rid themselves of British domination, and the English tried to deprive them of arms and ammunition with which to protect themselves from the wild tribes through which they would pass. The British probably did this more as a measure to protect themselves than for the value of the arms and ammunition.

Hard-pressed at length the Vaal¹ they reach,
Their joy almost o'ercomes their speech,
And, feeling now their perils o'er,
They pitch their tents along the shore.

VII

"But, ah, how soon they're taught to know
How fleet the joy, when lurking foe,
In secret, plans their overthrow,
For Moselekatse,² from the North,
With bands of natives sallied forth,
And, with the savage Kaffir yell
And thirst for blood, upon them fell.
Repulsed at first, they soon returned
(Through their defeat their vengeance burned),
In greater numbers than before;
Now, more than twenty to each Boer.
A hasty fort, with wagons made,
Was now the only barricade
With which the Boers their wives could shield,
But it were better far, than yield,
To die upon the battlefield.
On came the Kaffirs' countless horde;

¹*Vaal*: This river is the southern boundary line between Transvaal and Orange Free State, the third Boer settlement, Natal being the second. Natal is a small country east of Orange Free State on the coast of the Indian ocean and is the second country taken from the Boers by the British.

²*Moselekatse*: A cruel Kaffir chief.

Among their ranks the bullets poured,
And falling natives gave the groan,
Which, save in battle, is unknown.
The flying hordes view with delight
The smoke that rises o'er the site,
And deem the camp an ashen bed,
And Boers all numbered with the dead.
To Grahamstown the word they bore
That 'Camp and Boers are all no more,'
And Britons there are so elate,
That they with bonfires celebrate
The thought that all the hated Boers
At last are swept from Afric's shores.

VIII

The Boers, now free from Kaffir storm,
Resolve a stronger force to form:
They leave the waters of the Vaal
And join with Reteif¹ in Natal,
Which from Chief Dingaan had been bought,
To form such home as they had sought.
But Dingaan, jealous of our race,
Invited Reteif to his place,
With three score more of gallant Boers,
And when they were within his doors,
With ruthless sword and treacherous hand

¹*Reteif*: A Boer pioneer, who purchased land in the Natal territory from Dingaan, the dominant Zulu chief, for the purpose of establishing a second Boer colony.

He murdered all that faithful band :
Nor deemed his carnage yet complete,
But sent his band on chargers fleet,
And twice three hundred of the old
And wives and babes in death lay cold.

IX

"The rest a brighter aspect wore,
When Captain Jarvis stepped on shore ;
For, though a Briton, still they felt
Such scenes his heart would surely melt.
But, ah, they soon were undeceived,
For he came not as they believed
To render aid to the bereaved,
But to forbid the use of sword
On Dingaan and his Zulu horde,
And to disarm and leave them there,
Exposed to Dingaan's savage care.
But, from the hated Jarvis' sight
They hid their arms at dead of night,
And calmly waited then each Boer
'Til Jarvis' band should leave the shore.

X

From Capetown, like a brilliant flame,
The wise and brave Pretorius came,
Resolved their gloomy fate to share,
And seek for Dingaan in his lair,
And visit vengeance on his train,

For his six hundred victims slain.
He struck the foes a deadly stroke,
And Dingaan's power forever broke,
And, years beyond the mournful tones
Of Dingaan's victims' dying groans,
The Veldt was white with Zulu bones."

XI

Oh, great Pretorius, how shall fame
Pay fitting tribute to thy name?
For words are powerless to spread
Meet honors o'er thy valiant head.

XII

"But, oh, dear Reitz, it grieves my soul,
That e'en Natal, our father's goal,
So soon should pass from their control.
But Britain's guns and greater force,
Had shaped our fathers' gloomy course,
And dear Natal for which they fought,
And even from Zulus had been bought,
Like all their former cherished lands,
Unwilling, passed to British hands;
For Smith and vassals took the town,
And claimed the land for Britain's crown.

XIII

Oh, wretched people, no redress
Relieved their children's sore distress:
No star of hope rose o'er their lea

To guide them to their liberty;
But naked, hungry, fearful, cold,
Their wives are forced upon the wold,
Whose nights are spent on mountains brown,
Their only refuge from a Crown,
Which spreads religion's hovering wing
For none save those who serve the King."
Oh, let me not, deluded, pine
For hope that reaches only *mine*,
Or feint religion dark and fell,
That hopes no heaven and fears no hell.

XIV

"To Orange Free State they wandered back;
The English still were on their track,
And though the nation dawned so bright,
With such clear beams of Freedom's light,
Long ere its noon came England's blight,
And backward rolled its rising sun,
For British arms the land was won.

XV

"Then, o'er the Vaal our fathers came,
With Freedom still a burning flame
Upon each noble manly crest,
And British hate in every breast;
And though Great Britain's pledge was given
That we should never more be driven,
Or suffer aught from British hand,

Today they seek to seize the land,
And blast again the hope that we
May have a home from tyrants free.

XVI

"When to The Hague¹ the nations thronged
To arbitrate whatever wronged,
And settle every country's jar
Without arbitrament of war,
We gladly sought the shelt'ring wing,
And hoped to aid each prince and king
To lend his country greater good,
Nor spill again his nation's blood.
But Britain on our ruin bent,
Refused her Majesty's consent,
And when our prayer with scorn was spurned,
Our steps we sadly, homeward turned,
And gravely asked: 'If all the powers
Hold but injustice in their towers,
And all are led by selfish hate,
Why should we wish to arbitrate?'

¹At the International Conference which met at The Hague May 18th, 1899, Great Britain refused to co-operate with the other powers unless Transvaal was denied representation. The result was that the South African Republic was denied a seat in this convention. The adage, "Straws show the direction of the wind," is quite applicable in this case. This was less than five months before the war began, and Transvaal was left with no protection from other nations.

XVII

“How soon, dear Reitz, our land may feel
Again the weight of English heel,
For, in this hall, we only wait
Expressions new of English hate.
It grieves my soul to know the truth,
That all our valiant Transvaal youth,
Who lay to heart our country’s good,
Must stain their hands with British blood.
But they must win, the soil’s their own,
Nor owe they aught to British Crown.
In arms and God we place our trust,
And heaven will aid if we are just.

XVIII

“Oh, that our lands were drear and poor ;
A low morass or mountain moor ;
An uninviting field for spoil,
For then ’twould be a freeman’s soil.
Beneath our streets are diamonds found ;
With purest gold our mountains crowned,
But what are riches and estate,
If held beneath a power we hate ?
They but invite the subtle thief,
And bring to us severest grief ;
The robber takes our wealth and cheer
And life, or leaves us homeless here.”

XIX

The doorbell rings, they quickly glance
And see the mansion-guard¹ advance
With pallid face and troubled mien,
And by his side the agent—Green.
With measured step and stately tread,
The agent entered, bowed his head,
And firmly shook the hand of those
Who must so soon be deemed his foes.
“Hast thou some word from England sent?”
Enquired the agent President.
“I have, my lord,” said William Green,
“I have this letter from the Queen.”
The three all pale and breathless stood,
And icy seemed the coursing blood
That froze the pallor of their look,
As Reitz the “fateful message” took.
In solemn tones he slowly read
The haughty lines so soon to spread
Dismay and grief through ev’ry home,
And send ten thousand to the tomb,
For, in that letter, brief and bold,
Was bloody Transvaal war foretold.
The courteous agent then arose
And stood before his country’s foes,

¹*Mansion-guard*: Door keeper.

And asked a passport from their hand
To give safe passage from the land.
Oh, let not words presume to find
Expression meet for Kruger's mind,
As he the agent's passport signed.
When Britain's agent left the room,
All was as silent as the tomb,
While Kruger, filled with grief and care,
A moment bowed in silent prayer.
The prayer is ended, they arise
With aching heart and saddened eyes,
And out upon the pavement stand,
To warn the burghers of the land.

XX

The clock strikes "three"—a word has flown,
From hill to hill and town to town—
A single word is sent afar,
And that one, cruel word is "WAR."¹
O'er mountain, veldt and list'ning mead
The word is sent with lightning speed;
Along the borders of Natal,
And by the waters of the Vaal,
And to the upper Limpopo,
Where'er the wires electric go,

¹"Within an hour after this memorable interview a word was flashed over the wires of the two Republics from Pretoria. . . . The word was 'War!'"
(The Boer Fight for Freedom, p. 55.)

The hurrying word is flashing by,
Like thunder-beams across the sky.
Nor less that word the nation rends,
Than does the bolt that thunder sends,
Which has from clouds in fury broke,
Tear out the heart of mountain oak.
To Bloemfontein¹ the message flies,
And in their might the burghers rise,
For each is bound to aid the blow
Her sister gives a common foe.
The two republics must unite²
Against a foe whose selfish might
Has dared invade their common right,
And with their Mausers well in hand,
The Orange burghers willing stand,
To guard the freedom of the land.

XXI

From village, town and country home,
The son, the sire and grandsire come,
And, mingling youth with hoary age,
Prepare to meet the foeman's rage,
And pledge their fortune, life and all,
To aid their friends beyond the Vaal.

¹*Bloemfontein*: The capital of the Orange Free State.

²There was a mutual understanding between the two Republics that in case one was attacked the other would come to the rescue. Mr. M. T. Steyn, president of the Orange Free State, sent Mr. Kruger the following simple message: "We are ready."

XXII

The word has flown to British Camp;
The soldiers rise and coursers stamp
In hurrying, panting, mingling form,
Like boiling clouds of rising storm,
All eager o'er the Veldt to go,
And be the first to strike the foe.
From camp to camp the couriers ride,
And chafe each courser's foaming side
O'er flinty rocks and flagging sand,
To bear the news to post and rand.
Where wires can go, the wires are hot,
And horsemen fly where wires are not,
And soon each hill and vale has found
An echo for the blighting sound.
At once a hurrying courier¹ rides
Along the streams and mountain sides
To Limpopo beyond the plain
To the lone camp of brave O'Kane,
And raises on the midnight air
The bugle-note of Transvaal war.

¹This is the same courier mentioned in the latter part of the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

'Tis noon o'er London's stately domes,
And quiet fills her pleasant homes;
The sun, like many-jeweled gems,
Is sparkling on the breast of Thames.
The aspen leaves in breezes quake,
And boats are on the dimpling lake,
While children, in the autumn sun,
Released from school, now homeward run.
The oaky parks of golden brown,
Their leafy showers are flinging down,
To shield the flowers from autumn's frown.
The merchant-man, with business prest,
Can find no time for needed rest,
While housewives chant some merry song,
And duties rush their hours along.
The cars, with constant whirring hum,
Along the streets incessant come,
Whose clanking bells, pedestrians learn,
Are meant their steps aside to turn.
The auctioneer, all furrow-browed,
Holds up his wares before the crowd,
And with his guttural murm'ring loud
Of inarticulated words,
The listeners sways like lowing herds,

While some bright gewgaw, made of earth,
Is sold for more than twice its worth.
The infant from the window sees
The flowering shrubs and yellow trees,
And, chuckling with delight within,
Brings dimples to its cheek and chin,
And, as its mirth expands its charms,
'Tis tightly clasped in mother's arms.
Down through the park the lovers stroll,
All glad of heart and light of soul,
And as they while away the day,
Or dine at some renowned cafe,
Each lends an eager list'ning ear
To whispered words of nuptials near.

II

The house of Commons and of Lords
Have closed their war of stormy words;
Within their halls has ceased the din
Of Edward Clark¹ and Chamberlain,
Whose voices rung—are ringing still
Through ev'ry land, o'er ev'ry hill—
One, clamoring for an unjust war,

¹*Edward Clark*: About a week after war had been declared, Mr. Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, and Edward Clark held a rather warm discussion in the House of Commons. Mr. Clark contended that the war in South Africa could and should have been prevented, and intimated that the Colonial Secretary had committed a crime against civilization for which there was no excuse. (Hansard, 1st Vol., Autumn Session, 1899, pp. 307-311.)

And one opposed to bloody jar.
Thy words, oh, Clark, will long be sung
In many a land and foreign tongue,
And guardian spirits oft will come
In peaceful haloes o'er thy tomb.

III

But, hark! what strange sounds strike the ear?
Why start the timid maids with fear?
What mean these columns on the street,
As fifers play and drummers beat?
Behold, that proud, majestic tread,
Fair England's pride and foeman's dread.
With measured step and head erect,
And tufts of gold their shoulders deck't,
The soldiers march the crowded street,
And doff their caps the throngs to greet.
An hundred lads in uniform,
Along the streets on palfreys come
With haste and hurry everywhere
To bring the bulletins of war.
From these, the cause is quickly read,
The city filled with fear and dread,
And mothers' eyes are filled with tears,
To see the call for volunteers
To sail to Afric's southern shores,
And battle with the Transvaal Boers.

IV

The merchant leaves his inky pen;
The farmer quits the fallow glen;
And from the parks of shady bowers,
The lover seeks the city towers.
Unclosed is left the student's book;
The fisherman rolls up his hook,
And auctioneer, with goods unsold,
Steps from the block to be enrolled.
The city now is one turmoil
Like ocean-storm where billows boil,
And policemen are bearing back
The crowds that in each alley pack,
While pandemonium seems to reign,
And police feel their efforts vain.

V

At length within a window high,
Appears a man with curious eye,
Who gazes out upon the crowd,
And hears their exclamations loud.
He looks intent on all below,
As patriots watch approaching foe,
And hears them speak of Southern strife,
Of gleaming sword and dagger knife,
And from the throng upon the street
Hears many a threat of "quick defeat,"
But when above the common brawl,

He hears the word, "To the Transvaal,"
His eyes grow fierce as "Lord of Lorn,"¹
For 'tis the face of Conrad Dorn.
Alternate tears and anger trace
Both love and wrath in Conrad's face,
As love for friends now doubly rose,
And hatred for his country's foes.
A moment Conrad paced the room,
His valor rose o'er country's doom,
Then sank beneath depressing gloom,
For, but tomorrow, he had planned
To mount the wave for Afric's strand.
His soul in rapture had been nurst,
When in his dreams his home had burst
Upon his more than raptured sight,
And gave a climax to delight.
In dreams, again he saw his home,
His father, mother, sister, come,
And heard their words of welcome given,
Which were, to him, foretaste of heaven,
And bade him fix an earlier day
To haste him o'er the watery way.
And must he now that joy forgo?
Is not such thought a fatal blow?

¹*Lord of Lorn*: One of Walter Scott's characters in his "Lord of the Isles."

VI

He sat his cozy fire beside,
And for a time strove to decide,
And sought from ev'ry mental source,
To shape, for best, his future course.
A sudden flush came o'er his face;
Said he, "I'll serve my father's race,"
And, taking from his oaken chest
A package, placed it 'neath his vest;
Nor was it blade or weapon bare,
For Conrad kept no weapon there.
To Saris' room his way he took,
And found him poring o'er a book;
Nor did young Saris seem to know,
His land must face the British foe,
And soon as Conrad was at rest,
He thus his rival friend addressed:
"Up, Saris, up, come let us speed;
Of us our country now hath need:
The British sail to Southern shores,
To battle with the Transvaal Boers."
"Oh, Conrad, dear, and can it be,
From Britain we can ne'er be free?
Thrice have the lands of Southern shores,
Been ta'en by Britons from the Boers;
Thrice have our fathers borne defeat,
And at The Hague denied a seat.

Ah, poor Transvaal, and shalt thou now
To greed of Britain's monarch bow?
Dear country, now, my life and blood
To thee I pledge for country's good,
And thou, dear Conrad, witness take
That I such vow to country make."

VII

The rising tear in Conrad's eye
Forbade him instant to reply,
But, soon as he could find control,
The burden from his heart to roll,
On Saris' breast his hand he laid,
And in the softest accents said:
"'Tis not to those who friendship boast,
Or e'en to those who love thee most,
That thou a secret canst confide,
If its divulgence thou wouldst hide;
But to the one whose heart and tongue
Are steeled for those who do thee wrong,
Whose life would gladly feed the flame
Upon the altar of thy name;
To such a friend, and such alone,
Thou dar'st to make a secret known.
And now wilt thou, forever sealed,
Keep this my secret unrevealed?"
"Dear Conrad, I thy word will keep,
As safe as if beneath the deep,

And, though to rack, my life should yield,
My lips will be forever sealed,
For thou'rt too just to harm propose
Save for our country's vilest foes."

VIII

"I deem thee, Saris, true and just;
Such soul as thine I well can trust,
And, though my life the forfeit be,
I trust my safety all to thee,"
And, as his hand his bosom prest,
He took the package from his vest,
And thus again his friend address:
"Here, Saris, take this lantern small,
Made for my sister in Transvaal,
And join thyself to Joubert's¹ band
And help to save our native land,
While I will join a British corps
And sail with it from England's shore.
When thou shalt see my glittering spark,
Then with three flashes through the dark
Thy answer I shall deem complete
And give thy band the warning meet;
Thus with the lamp thou'lt serve thy land
Though it was made for fairer hand.
Tell thy commander of thy friend,

¹*Joubert*: Piet Joubert was Commander-in-Chief of the Boer army at the beginning of the war.

That thou may'st better service lend,
But still, with all thy courteous grace,
Conceal for me my name and place,
Though they will call me 'Billy Brande'¹
When I am with the British band."

"'Tis well," said Saris, "but thy heart
Hath planned for thee a dang'rous part,
But thou art wise and quick thine eye,
And well thou'lt serve us as a spy.
Remember, Conrad, thou'rt exposed
Alike to friends and those opposed,
And while thy foes thy valor claim,
Thy friends may take the fatal aim,
And, killed by us in battle be,
Unknown to all but God and me.
But oh, dear Conrad, may thy hand
Be able long to serve our land,
And may thine angel guard thy head,
Till triumph o'er our country spread.
Take thou this little ring of gold,
And should our prison e'er thee hold,
Send it to our commander chief,
And I will come to thy relief.

¹Conrad Dorn is known as "Billy Brande" throughout the campaign in South Africa. In the Boer army there was a young scout named Daanie Theron, whose daring acts have formed the basis for some of the feats ascribed to Billy Brande. Theron was killed near Krugersdorp, his boyhood home, in September, 1900.

And now, my friend, adieu, adieu,
And may'st thou be as safe as true,
And may thy dangerous deed of love
Salvation for our country prove.
Remember when thou'rt with our foes,
That there is one who doubly knows
What dang'rous snares are round thee spread,
And prays protection o'er thy head."

IX

The hand of Saris Conrad took
With parting sobs convulsive shook,
And thanking Saris for his aid
In broken, tender tones he said:
"The palm-leaf¹ sent to us from heaven
Has many a pleasant moment given,
And seems 'twere sent to closer link
A soul to soul on danger's brink.
'Twas but a tender with'ring leaf,
And brought no cause of fear or grief,
And though 'twas burned to save regret,
Its incense lingers round us yet.
And oh! dear Saris, may the palm,
Which now we seek, bring freedom's calm,
And heaven attend our earnest prayer,
To save our country from despair.

¹*Palm-leaf*: This refers to the prize in the telegraphic contest given in chapter IV.

And oh! Dear Saris, should I fall
On battle-field by random ball,
I only ask that thou wilt go
To my dear home on Limpopo,
And tell the loved ones how I fell
And give to them my last farewell.
Tell father how his only son
Had misdirected many a gun,
And, though a dang'rous track I trod,
I trusted all to freedom's God.
Tell mother, who so often prayed
That I should lend our country aid,
That through her son's most dang'rous years,
Those prayers still sounded in his ears,
And tell her not to weep for me,
For life was given for liberty.
Tell sister—Oh, that precious girl,
Her memory makes my senses whirl—
Tell her that even the war-drum's roll
Chased not her features from my soul.
Tell her to seek, once more, the bower,
Where last we prayed at twilight hour,
And kneel again to God in prayer
For strength her saddest grief to bear.
And now, dear Saris, if no more
We meet upon this earthly shore,
May it be ours again to meet

Upon that shining, golden street,
And, free from strife, forever dwell—
Farewell, my dearest friend—farewell.

CHAPTER X

Along the shores of Afric's streams
 The day is lost in slumbering dreams;
 The sun behind the western hills
 No longer smiles upon the rills;
 The sea is white with hostile ships¹
 And mothers give with quivering lips,
 Perhaps, a last "Good-bye" to sons
 Who now must face the British guns.
 O'er many a kop², by many a stream,
 The flickering fires of foemen gleam,
 Whose tents, revealed by fading light,
 Seem spectral demons of the night,
 Such as round lonely church-yards stray
 To check benighted travelers' way.
 The noon of night³ the watchmen tell;
 The patriots wave their last farewell,
 And soon beneath the falling rain
 Are lost to view upon the plain.
 O'er veldt and vale and stony nek,⁴

¹*Hostile ships*: These were English ships bringing British soldiers to Transvaal. This was October 11th, 1899.

²*Kop*: A little hill.

³The first detachment of burghers from Pretoria left at midnight during a heavy rainfall.

⁴*Nek*: A sharp ridge or backbone of a hill.

And dangerous pass the soldiers trek,
And ere the morn has chased the damp,
The patriot band has reached the camp.

II

Soon from the South an armored train¹
Is seen to move across the plain;
A rail is moved and Boers await
The moving fort with British freight;
The train derailed, an easy prey
The British fall to De la Rey.²
No loss of life or flowing blood
As round the train the burghers stood;
The British lost but train and stores
And men, surrendered to the Boers.³
But ah! how soon will sadder tale
Be wafted on the mournful gale,
Of dead and dying, side by side,
Borne from Talana's⁴ gory tide.

III

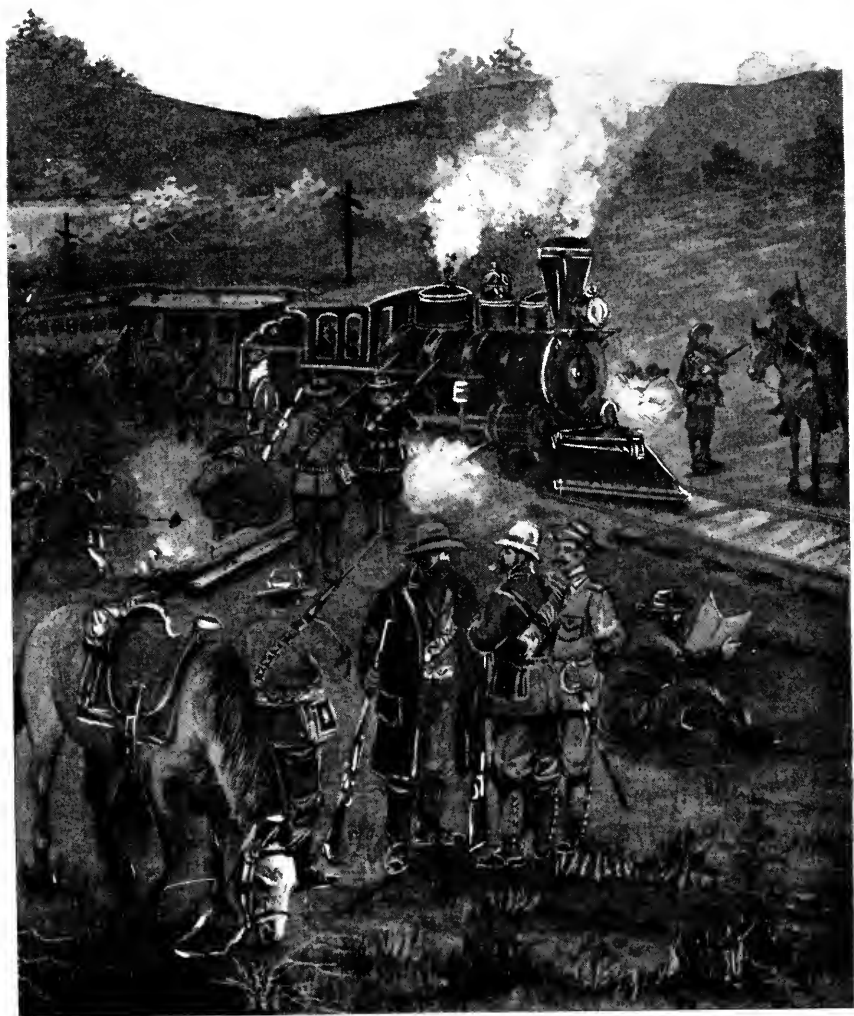
At early morn, while still the dark
Forbade the sun's horizon mark,

¹*Armored train:* This consisted of a boxcar covered with armor-plate. There was generally two of these cars, one before and one behind the locomotive. The British attempted to use these trains, but they were not a success.

²*De la Rey:* A Boer general.

³This was the first engagement of the war, and is sufficiently explained in the text.

⁴*Talana Hill:* This hill is in the northern part of Natal, the second country which the English took from the Boers, and is the first real battlefield of this war.



No loss of life or flowing blood
As 'round the train the burghers stood.



The burghers rode at rapid pace
To reach Talana's northern base.¹
In columns three the troops divide,
While yet the dark their forms may hide,
With noiseless care to left and right,
And up Talana's rugged height.
The morning dawns, and firmly now
Four cannons crown Talana's brow
To issue death to Britain's men,
Whose tents, like goblins, deck the glen,
And as the sun majestic rose,
Its rays revealed the deadly foes.
Oh, would that we could loose the bar
That shields the ear from pangs of war,
And teach what anguish lies within
The ranks that lose and those that win.

IV

Pretorius² stands his guns beside,
In warrior strength and freeman's pride,
While Meyer³ scans with searching eye
Penn Symons' throng that 'neath him lie,

¹The burghers reached this hill before daylight on the 20th of October, 1899, nine days after the declaration of war. They dragged four cannons up the northern side of this hill, and when morning dawned they could see the British camp in the valley to the south.

²*Pretorius*: A Boer commander who managed the four cannons on the hill.

³*Meyer*: The general who commanded the Boers at Talana Hill.

Which, by the light of rising day,
He sees preparing for the fray.
But hark! There comes a sound that shocks
Talana's crest of rugged rocks,
And, in the still of morning-tide
Comes thundering down the mountainside,
As in the vale a bursting shell
Among Penn Symons'¹ soldiers fell.
Pretorius watched with eager ken,
If his first shell had erring been
Directed from his Creusot² gun;
But soon he saw their columns broke,
As bursting shell and boiling smoke
Rose up to greet the morning sun.
Suspense has ended in the roar
From British camp and sturdy Boer,
As through each rank the cannons pour,
With fiery smoke and hissing breath,
Swift messengers of blood and death.
The shot from Krupp³ and Creusot fly,
And bring the foemen's quick reply,
While hills send back, for miles around,
The clashing echoes of the sound.

¹*Penn Symons*: British commander at this battle.

²*Creusot*: A kind of cannon of French pattern.

³*Krupp*: A rapid-firing gun used in the artillery service.



But soon he saw their columns broke
As bursting shell and boiling smoke
Rose up to meet the morning sun.



V

The fife and drum in British camp
Combine with shout and coursers' tramp,
As British columns strong and fleet
Haste on to glory or defeat.
On right, on left, on, on they come,
'Mid rifle hail and bursting bomb,
With streaming banners overhead
And groaning earth beneath their tread.
Five thousand¹ strong, the glen they sweep,
While half that number hold the steep,
And Meyer's burghers firmly stand
Against Penn Symons' mighty band.
With eager soul and rapid pace
At length they reach the mountain's base
And try to rush the upward track,
But burghers' Mausers² hurl them back,
And, 'neath the shot from mountain's crown,
Their columns reel tumultuous down.

¹The British at this battle were about five thousand strong, while Meyer had only about half that number.

²*Mausers*: This is a kind of rifle used by the Boers at the beginning of the war. They soon learned, however, that the Lee-Metford and Martini-Henry rifles were better guns, and as they had no trouble in capturing from the British all that was needed, the Mauser fell almost into disuse before the war was over, though to prevent confusion the Mauser will be retained in this story as the rifle of the burghers until the end of the war.

VI

The Britons are no laggard foes,
Nor yield their ranks to timid blows,
But here they face a patriot band,
Who fight for home and native land,
Whose lives they deem but lightly weigh
Against a British tyrant's sway.
Again they come with flag unfurled,
And back again by Mausers hurled,
And back and forth till hill and plain
Are covered with the British slain.

VII

Now plunged Penn Symons with his might
Into the thickest of the fight,
Where lead, like rain, came pouring down
From guns upon Talana's crown,
And man by man, inspiring each
That victory lay within his reach,
But ere they gain the rocky walls,
With mortal wound Penn Symons falls.
Again they come with rage and grief,
To deal dire vengeance for their chief,
When lo! the sun its light refused
To men who thus its rays abused.
A foggy mist¹ came slowly down

¹*Foggy mist:* It was about noon when this fog settled upon the two armies.

Upon Talana's crimson crown,
And rolled its misty billows o'er
The British ranks and valiant Boer,
And like a hovering angel spread
Its wings of mercy o'er the dead.
The Boers retire beyond the rill
And Britons dare not climb the hill,
Lest they unwitting find their course
Lead into toils of greater force,
And each must leave, however loth,
The battle-field unclaimed by both.
The 'wildered bands now wandering go,
Each fearful lest some groping foe
Should in the pathway sudden rise
With salutation of surprise,
As, through the maze of misty damp,
They try in vain to find the camp.

VIII

A British corps upon the veldt
Perceived a boy¹ who weeping knelt
Beside his father's dying form,
Brave victim of the leaden storm;
The stripling begged with tearful eye
To be allowed to linger by,

¹This lad was named Scheepers. Later on, this band in their wanderings in the fog met with a detachment of Boers and were compelled to release their prisoners, but when the boy returned his father was dead.

And try to staunch the crimson tide
That issued from his father's side,
But e'en that prayer the foe denied.
They urged the lad at ruthless pace
By means as merciless as base,
For prisoners give a Briton joy,
E'en though the victim be a boy.

IX

Approaching night o'er hill and plain
Has turned the mist to chilly rain,
And as the wounded patriots lie,
Shut out from even a friendly sky,
They curse the hour that Cecil Rhodes¹
First planned the wreck of their abodes,
And, undeterred by rain and blood,
Resolve to die for country's good.

X

When morning dawned the foe had fled,
And left the wounded and the dead,
With victualed wagons, full a score,
And much of ammunition store
To mercies of the hated Boer.

¹*Cecil Rhodes:* Mr Rhodes was an Englishman who had gone to South Africa, probably in search of health, about the time that gold and diamonds were discovered there. His home was at Kimberly, just west of Orange Free State. He had become immensely rich and was regarded by the Boers as the prime instigator of the war. He died of heart disease a short time before the close of hostilities, March 26th, 1902.

The Boers knew not the battle won,
Until the rays of rising sun
Had lifted up the misty shield,
And they could view the battle-field;
And as they gazed upon the glen
Where British foes had yester been,
And watched their hurried columns meet
Upon the plain in quick retreat,
A thousand yells exultant rose,
Whose echoes reached the flying foes,
Which only served to urge the mass
On through the dangerous mountain pass.
Three days and nights the bands retreat,
Thus emphasizing their defeat,
Which jingo lords, through British Press,
Translate into their *first success*.¹

XI

'Tis quiet now o'er hill and glen,
Save cries of pain from wounded men,
And thirst that follows sanguine flow,
Which none but wounded soldiers know.
The scene appealed to Meyer's heart
And touched his spirit's milder part,
For wounded Britons' friends had fled

¹While the British were thus retreating, leaving their dead and wounded upon the battlefield, the British war papers were feasting their readers with the glorious news of a British success.

And left them mingled with the dead.
Up from the stream is water brought,¹
And every wounded soldier sought,
While surgeons give their tender care
To friends and foes an equal share,
And only ask the Britons brought
If they can tell for whom they fought.²
The living share a Christian's aid,
And for the dead a grave is made,
While o'er the graves of friend and foe
Salutes³ are fired, respect to show.
Down in a quiet, shady glen,
Far from the haunts of living men,
Where leafy trees their branches spread
Like angels' pinions overhead;
Where travelers hear the cooing dove
Tell to its mate its tale of love;
Oblivious now to battle-tide,
Sleep Boers and Britons side by side.

¹No history which I have seen mentions the burghers as carrying water to the British wounded at this particular battle, but as they did so on other occasions—as at Nicholson's Kop—it is mentioned here by anachronism.

²"A Boer doctor at Modderspruit . . . asked him" (a wounded Briton) "for whom he thought he was fighting, country or capitalists? . . . 'Well,' replied the soldier, 'I won't swear it is not for the Mahdi! I cannot, after what I have seen of the Boers on the field, and since I have been wounded in this battle, believe I am fighting for the Queen of England.'"—(The Boer Fight for Freedom, p. 161.)

³*Salutes are fired:* Anachronism from General Ben Viljoen after the battle of Modderspruit. When a soldier is buried, guns are fired over the grave as a mark or respect.

XII

Oh, fair Talana, many a year
Wilt thou behold the widow's tear ;
Long will thy rocks with gunner's scar
Speak to thy youth of cruel war ;
But when the hand of time shall chase
Each wound of thine from crown to base,
Still in the heart of thy proud race
Will linger seeds of freedom sown,
Whose yield will shake the British throne.

CHAPTER XI

Oh, that Transvaal could view no more
The blood of Briton or of Boer;
But ah! Majuba's¹ crimson top
Contagion brings to every kop,
To Briton vengeance, hope to Boer,
Unmindful each of other's gore.

II

Along the ocean's glistening foam
Ten thousand troops from England come,
Who lightly deem² the task assigned
A country's liberty to bind,
And pass with jest the sanguine flow
That brings, to hearts of mothers, woe,
As though 'twere but a harmless strife

¹*Majuba*: This is a mountain in the southeastern part of Transvaal. On the top of this mountain the Boers utterly defeated a British detachment under Sir George Colley, February 27th, 1881. Six hundred and fifty Britons took a stand on the top of the hill. About 400 burghers climbed the hill with their rifles, and when the battle was over the British had lost 283 men in killed, wounded and prisoners, and the Boers had one man killed and five wounded.

²*Lightly deem*: The British thought it would be quite an easy task to subdue the Boers, and confidently expected to eat their Christmas dinner in Pretoria. Their disappointment must have been great indeed when they found that instead of from October 11th to Christmas, it required two years and eight months to complete the task, and even then were compelled to give terms which scarcely bore the mark of victory.

To seek a Christian brother's life.
The cruel joke and laughter's roar
Index their views of "worthless Boer,"
As they presage, with biased mind,
An easy conquest soon to find.
But there is one who knows too well
More than he now can dare to tell,
Who shares no joy in jestings rude
Of Briton's low and murderous brood:
It is the scout for Britain's band—
The young and valiant "Billy Brande."
His manly face so young and bright
Finds grace in every Briton's sight,
And, though he shuns their jestings low,
As slave would shrink from master's blow,
Still, for his bearing bold and grand,
They have respect for "Billy Brande."
A well-observant eye would note
The scowls that o'er his features float,
Whene'er a mention, low and base,
Is coupled with the Transvaal race;
But he avoids the shrewder gaze
Of those who know deception's ways,
Whose eyes are trained to read the mind
From lineaments but ill defined,
Or ears to catch deceptive word
Unnoticed by the common herd.

III

Upon fair Afric's shining strand
At Port Natal the transports land,
And troops are marched along the shores,
'Which Britons seized from weaker Boers
Whose newer homes and fresher soil
Again the British plan to spoil,
While views a heartless gazing world
From land and home a nation hurled.
Now Buller¹ leads the British throng;
An army twice ten thousand strong,
'Til, o'er Colenso's grassy dale,
His tents are spread along the vale,
While Botha, with five thousand men,
The kopjes² hold above the glen.

IV

Oh, Tugela,³ thou flowing stream,

¹*Buller*: The British general who commanded at Colenso.

²*Kopje* (Pronounced Kop'-ha): A little hill, same as kop.

³*Tugela*: A river in the northern part of Natal. It flows eastward, and Colenso, a small town, stands a few hundred yards south of the river. At a mile or less east of Colenso the river turns abruptly north and washes the western base of Langwani, a rather high hill on its eastern bank, continues its course northward a few miles and turns eastward again. Three miles west of Colenso there is a ford on the river called "Bridle drift." Buller and his forces were camped south of Colenso, while Botha and his burghers were north of the river, directly west of Langwani hill. This was one of the most disastrous battles for the English during the war, and unless the reader fixes well in his mind the positions mentioned in this note, many of the statements in the text will be entirely meaningless.

Upon thy banks how oft the dream
Of freedom filled the burgher's breast,
And gave to toil a greater zest,
And ended day with calmer rest!
But, ah! those dreams were idle tales,¹
For, soon their hopes were turned to wails
Of women on the mountain moor,
All homeless, friendless, hungry, poor,
While British robbers of their nest
Deny, e'en now, the wanderers rest.
The homes they made beyond the Vaal
Are threatened now with British thrall,
But ere those homes such thralldom reach,
The art of war will patriots teach,
And ere the goal shall sate their eye,
Will many a Briton learn to die.

V

The sun had set and all was still,
And quiet flowed each listening rill;
The Britons took their evening meal,
And jested light of foeman's steel,
As, round the camp-fire's ruddy blaze,
They talked, or sang their warrior lays.
Within the Chieftain's² tent were set
The officers in council met,

¹*Dreams were idle tales:* Natal was taken from the Boers by the English about the year 1840.

²*Chieftain:* General Buller.

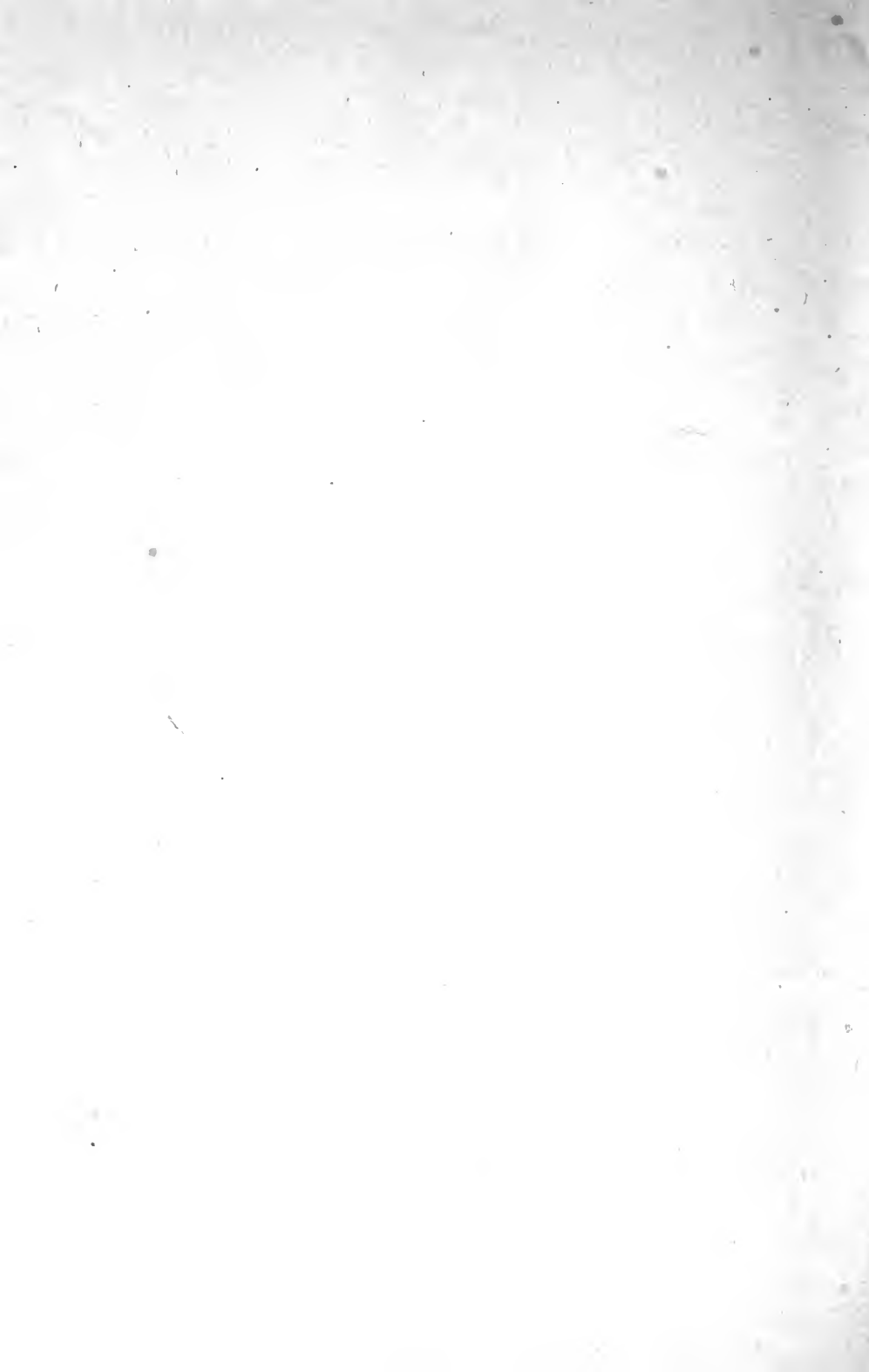
And as the stars came slowly out,
The Chieftain called to him his Scout,
And, in his uniform arrayed,
The summons "Billy Brande" obeyed.
The Scout, the Chieftain closely scanned,
And then he said: "Up, Captain Brande,
Lead thou thy troopers o'er the plain,
Where'er thou dar'st to guide the rein,
And, long ere dawn its beamlets show,
Bring me full tidings of the foe.
At three my troops will face the damp
Around young Botha's flimsy camp,
And morn will view yon western kop
With Britain's men upon its top,
And north and east around the Boer,
From every hill my guns will roar,
And, 'neath the sun's yet eastern flame,
My troops will bag the tincheled game."

VI

Young Brande now bowed him from the tent,
But on far different mission bent,
And thanked the darkness for its grace
To hide the scowl upon his face.
Quick to his steed the captain sprung,
The courser's sides his rowels stung,
And, with his score of daring men,
He swiftly dashed along the glen.



To Bridle Drift he made his way
Nor did the stream his course delay
For as he neared the river side
He plunged his steed into the tide.



Each of his troop was Britain's friend,
Nor must they guess that he would lend
A friendly aid to Buller's foe,
Or cause a Briton's blood to flow ;
And, feigning love for England's cause,
He bade the band of warrior's pause,
And, hiding hate within his breast,
He thus the scouting band addressed :
"Brave comrade troopers, we tonight
Must dare to die for country's right,
And, if there's one who fears to go
Around the camp of Britain's foe,
Let him return to Buller's wing
Unfit to serve a pauper's king,
Nor think his path from danger free,
Who dares tonight to ride with me."
The troopers all with one acclaim
Resolved to die for Britain's name,
And by their accents plainly showed
Their heart was in their country's good.
To bridle drift he made his way
Nor did the stream his course delay,
For as he neared the river side,
He plunged his steed into the tide,
And well it was that yester night
His eye had caught young Saris' light,
And thus a way of safety found

Around brave Botha's laager¹ ground,
Else had his life the forfeit paid,
And burghers mourned his willing aid.
They gained, at length, the farther shore
Nor challenge heard from guarding Boer,
And as they on and onward sped
All was as silent as the dead.

VII

O'er kop and vale and rocky height
Orion guides their course aright,
For in the east that blazing star
Seems beckoning on the sons of war.
The band now took the eastward way;
Upon their right the laager lay,
And when they reached a kopje's crest,
The captain bade his comrades rest;
And while they sat upon the ground,
And sent their jovial jestings round,
Their leader drew himself apace
To better view the laager place.
Below them in the quiet glen
Lay Botha's band of patriot men,
But naught of camp shone through the night,
Save now and then a flickering light
Of guardsman's lamp or ruddier hue
Of coals expiring 'neath the dew.

¹*Laager*: A Boer camp.

Now from his vest, all unobserved,
He took the lamp so long preserved,
And gave a signal to the camp,
And hoped reply from Saris' lamp.
Soon on the wings of central night
Came flashes three of piercing light,
Which caused his heart with joy to swell;
Joy which he felt but dared not tell.
He touched the key with nervous hand
To warn brave Botha's burgher band,
And while he felt for them a prayer,
He flashed this message through the air:
*"Ho! Saris, ho! guard well thy right,
The foe surrounds thy camp tonight."*

VIII

With lighter heart and calmer mood,
Before his band the captain stood,
And, glancing o'er the eastern dell,
He gave command to mount the selle.¹
Each warrior rose and mantle shook,
And o'er the camp cast glancing look,
Like heavy-antlered, hunted stag,
That stands upon the mountain crag,
And feigns contempt for hunter's blow,
But fears the hound that bays below.
All unobserved, the scouting troop

¹*Selle*: A saddle.

March down the kopje's eastern stoop,
And ere an hour, again they stand
Upon the river's mossy strand.
Again they plunge into the stream,
The base¹ of many a Chieftain's dream,
And when they reach the farther brink
And midnight's chilly stillness drink,
They southward turn by river's edge,
By many a jutting rocky ledge,
And when they reach the veldty height,
Langwani bursts upon their sight.
All on its top is cold and still,
Nor signs of life along the hill,
And by the breeze denied a breath,
It seems to sleep the sleep of death.

IX

Beneath their tread the valley heaves,
Mimosas² close their tender leaves,
And, well beyond brave Botha's guard—
Their southward course by nothing barred—
O'er stream and veldt and heathery sward,
The sounding hoof of chargers' tramp
Is heard approaching Buller's camp,

¹*Base*: Foundation. This stream was considered a barrier, to some extent, to the approach of foes.

²*Mimosa*: A kind of plant, varying from a small vine to a scrubby tree, which has the power of closing its leaves on being touched. There are groves of such trees around Colenso.

And when they reach the British line,
The captain gives the countersign¹—
Unmindful of the foaming spray
From coursers' sides that deck the way
Like flaky snow by tempest driven
When winter scours the face of heaven—
And, swift as carrier-pigeon free,
They press to Buller's tent at three.
Already do the columns form
Like threat'ning clouds of rising storm,
And lamp and torch in many a row
Reveal the strength of Botha's foe.
Assembled now in Buller's tent,
But few the hasty moments spent,
As round their Chief the troopers stand
To hear report from Billy Brande.
"Attention! Chief," the scout began,
"While Hastings² here—thy bravest man—
Shall spokesman be of all we know,
And plan thy march around the foe."
"'Tis well," said Buller, "but be brief
Lest rising day should bring us grief,
And find our tinchel still undrawn
Around the young and wary fawn."

¹*Countersign*: Pass-word.

²*Hastings*: One of Brande's comrades.

X

“Ah! noble Buller,” Hastings said,
“Would that such honor could be spread
In truth, above thy servant’s head;
But ‘bravest man’ alone applies
To Captain Brande, as brave as wise,
Whose dauntless heart no danger flies.
’Twas he that led our band tonight
Around the guards of Botha’s right,
And, by his skill and daring, found
Safe passage round the burgher’s ground.
To bridle drift he led the way,
Nor did the stream our course delay,
And, though we feared a Mauser’s gleam,
We passed unchallenged through the stream
And out upon the northern bank
Around the west of Botha’s flank,
Nor did for rest a moment stop
’Til we had reached a northern kop,
Where, to the south in small array,
The sleepy tents of Botha lay.
Then down the eastern slope we passed
O’er kop and vale, until at last
The Tugela again we crossed,
And sight of Botha’s laager lost.
Here, southward turned our darksome way
Along the river’s rising spray,

And when upon the veldt we drew,
Langwani's crest arose to view,
But veldt and stream and craggy hill
So quiet seemed and deathly still,
All wore the air of funeral car
More than the busy scenes of war.
On through mimosa groves we pressed,
Nor paused again for courser's rest
'Til where yon stately palm trees wave
The pass-word to thy guard we gave,
And now before our Chief we stand
To wait alone his high command."
"Well hast thou done," the Chief replied;
"Take thou thy rest 'til morning tide,
For greater service thou canst yield,
As scouts, than on the battle-field.
And now, brave Brande, this daring deed
Deserves a soldier's highest meed,
And I could envy thee thy name
Thou mayest from hist'ry's pages claim;
For with thy aid our cannon's roar
Will seal the fate of hated Boer."

XI

The band dispersed, and to his tent
Each trooper now, all buoyant, went,
And soon, with calm and peaceful breast,
They all, save one, had sunk to rest.

With pensive mood young Brande retired
And often of himself inquired:
"What laws have 'hated Boers' transgressed
That they should now be thus distressed?
And is it wrong, Oh, heaven! that I
Should serve my country as a spy?
If it be wrong, Oh, God, forgive
The deed that aids my country live."
Oh, who can scale the spirit's height
That dares for native land to fight,
Or measure depth of warrior soul
That seeks but freedom as its goal?

CHAPTER XII

'Tis three o'clock; oh, solemn night,
Why do thy stars refuse their light
To veldty hills and winding streams,
Where eve beheld their twinkling beams?
Why do the mists come rolling down
Upon mimosa grove and town,
Concealing all upon the plain
Beneath the robe of falling rain?
Oh, Tugela, thou gentle stream,
Thy surface greets no starry gleam,
But, like the grief of sorrowing souls
Thick darkness o'er thy bosom rolls.
Does heaven itself refuse to see
Thy sons contend for Liberty?
But ah! full soon thy bosom fair
Will catch the gleam of cannon's glare,
And the harsh voice of battle's roar
Convulse thy wave from shore to shore.
Thy banks will shelter heroes' graves,
And blood be mingled with thy waves,
And long Colenso's maids will dream
Of fancied moans beside thy stream.
Already Buller's columns stand,
And but await their Chief's command

Across the plain to northward go
To reach the kops beyond the foe.
When Buller heard his trusty scout,
Quick was removed his faintest doubt
That he an easy way had found
To circle Botha's laager ground.
Command is given, the columns start;
Quick rushes blood through every heart,
Each eager now to meet the foe
And be the first to strike a blow.
Three columns move; one to the right
To scale Langwani's steepy height;
And central troops approach the bridge,
To occupy Fort Wylie ridge,¹
While others to the leftward shift
To cross the stream at Bridle Drift.
But ah! the Boers have caught the light
That Brande had flashed to Saris' sight,
And all along the northern strand
The burghers with their rifles stand.

II

But hark! what sounds come through the damp,
Ere warrior burghers leave the camp?
What notes are those like muffled drum

¹*Fort Wylie Ridge:* This is a hill on the north side of the river between the river and Botha's camp. The bridge spanned the river between Colenso and Fort Wylie.

That o'er the hills and valleys come?
A thousand voices seem to rise
Like angels chanting from the skies
With chorus sung by seraphim;
It is the burghers' morning hymn.¹
Each voice attuned to Christian lays,
To God its humblest tribute pays,
And as the anthem floats along,
Each warrior's soul is in the song.

III

The hymn is ended, and a prayer
Is borne upon the morning air
As they, with contrite, pleading tones
For mercy seek the Throne of thrones.
Oh, that the world had listening ear
That humble, earnest prayer to hear,
As in humility they come
To God for aid to save their home.

IV

With gun and well-filled bandolier²
Each burgher now, with naught of fear,
Nor star to shed its twinkling gleam,
Through darkness seeks the winding stream,

¹It was the custom of the Boers to engage in singing and prayers before going into battle.

²*Bandolier*: A belt worn around the body or over the shoulder for carrying ammunition.

And long before the foe can reach
That fatal river's southern beach,
The watchful, trusting, praying Boer
Is guarding well its northern shore;
Nor do the burgher soldiers know
How much to Billy Brande they owe,
As they beside the river stand
To wait approach of Buller's band.
Far to the south from Buller's camp
The Britons come with steady tramp,
Nor voice of trump or rolling drum,
As through the dark the British come,
Attends their march across the heath
Into the jaws of certain death.

V

The drift, the bridge, the lofty hill,¹
Which to the scouts had seemed so still,
Are now aflame with watchful eyes
As silently each burgher lies
With Mauser held within his grasp,
Whose sting, more deadly than the asp,
So soon may tell its mournful tale
Of blood along Colenso's vale.
With careless step, on, on they come,
Nor deem so near their early doom
Which now prepares for them a tomb.

¹*Lafty hill*: Langwani.

So near they come, they seem to rise
Before the watchful burgher's eyes
A moving wall of darker shade
Than clouds upon the veldt had laid.
At length they reach the southern shore
Full now in sight of hiding Boer,
And on the bank their columns stand
By Tugela's dark, mossy strand.

VI

They pause, and lo! above the stream
From yonder bank there comes a gleam,
As though the lightning's blinding glare
Leap't out from earth into the air,
And o'er the stream the leaden rain
Mows down their ranks like ripened grain.¹
Confusion marks the human wall,
As riders reel and chargers fall,
And blood and death and dying yell
With consternation fill the dell.
'Twas but a moment, all was done;

¹This attempt of the British to surround the Boer camp in the night is connected with the battle of Colenso by anachronism. It was at the battle of Magersfontein, December 11th, at which this disastrous attempt was made, four days before the battle of Colenso. At Magersfontein, Lord Methuen undertook to surround General Cronjé's laager under cover of the darkness and unexpectedly encountered the entrenched burghers at half-past three in the morning. It is said that 700 Britons fell in a half minute. The battle of Colenso was fought December 15th, 1899, and did not begin until after daylight.

A thousand mothers wept a son,
And England's hope of easy pass,
Lay buried 'neath the dying mass,
As from the field the living fled,
And left the dying and the dead.

VII

When day peeped forth, the parting cloud
No longer spread its misty shroud
Above the valley, stream and hill,
Which yester eve had found so still,
And when the prince of morning rose,
The sky was spread above the foes.

VIII

Along Colenso's southern glen
The tattered host of Buller's men
In restless bands dejected lay,
Poor numerous remnant of the fray.
They seemed unwilling yet to yield
To such small foe the battle-field,
And thus allow the world to see
Their troops' inferiority.

IX

Near to the bridge twelve cannons come;
O'er burghers' heads the bullets hum,
As Colonel Long the guns command
And makes for England stubborn stand,
With hope to change by such array

The sad misfortunes of the day.
His guns are trained upon the hill;
Their echoes distant valleys fill,
As shrapnel, lyddite shell and ball
Among brave Botha's soldiers fall.
The burghers lie behind the rocks
And thus avoid the cannons' shocks,
And from the ranks of hidden Boers
A ceaseless rain of bullets pours,
While every shot is made with aim
And brings its tale of "British game."
No man on earth could hope to stand
Before the storm of such a band,—
Such horizontal sheets of lead
As round the cannon-service spread,—
And soon deserted stands each gun
All silent, useless and alone.

X

Thus stood the cannons on the field,
Nor Boers nor foes the guns would yield;
The fear of Boers the British felt,
Nor burghers dared to cross the veldt.
All knew the danger and were loath
To reach the guns in range of both,
And thus they stood by foemen crossed,
Ungained by Boer, to Briton lost.
At length the British madly dash,

(Brave was the deed, the action rash),
And with a thousand daring men
Like wintry blast they sweep the glen,
And like the rocks of mountain-pass
Around the guns the Britons mass.
But ah! 'tis sad to tell of strife
That costs so much of British life,
For such brave deed must win applause
Even though 'tis joined with wrongful cause.
Again upon the fatal spot
Pours down a rain of hissing shot,
And Mauser-ball and Creusot-shell
The bead-roll of the British tell.

XI

But ho! a Red Cross¹ banner soars
Between the guns and "hated Boers,"
And, safe as 'neath a flag of truce
The teams from Red Cross carts they loose,
And thus, beneath world-honored shield,
They rush two cannons from the field,
Preferring censure and disgrace
To leaving cannons in their place.

¹*Red Cross*: It is an understanding among all civilized nations that the Red Cross must be respected. It is used in caring for the wounded in battle, its mission being one of mercy, and it is a branch of international trust for it to be used for anything else, though it is said that the Britons took teams from the Red Cross wagons and thus rescued two of the twelve cannons left on the field at Colenso.

But, ninety men by Bullock¹ led,
Remain when all the rest have fled,
And lie concealed in dongas deep
And hope remaining guns to keep
'Til darkness, like protecting arm,
Can shield their rank from burgher harm,
And 'neath the sheltering wing of night
To move the guns from Botha's sight.

XII

But ah! the Boers too eager grow
Such prize to win from such a foe,
And Emmett brave and Pohlman wise
Crossed o'er the stream to bring the prize,
And with two hundred burgher sons
They rush the dongas near the guns.
"Surrender, Britons!" Pohlman cried,
And trembling foes at once complied,
But their commander, Bullock brave,
A piercing look to Pohlman gave,
And with revolver fired a shot,
Resolved to die upon the spot,
Preferring death in valiant fight
To life beneath a prison's blight.
An hundred bullets would have hissed

¹*Bullock*: An English colonel. Whatever may be said of his judgment, surely cowardice was not one of his faults. The shot which he fired wounded a burgher in the hand.

Through Bullock's form, and he had kissed
The earth, reward for that rash deed;
Reward, too oft the soldier's meed.
Put Pohlman saw and much admired
Impulse that Bullock's soul inspired,
And to his men quick orders gave
The valiant Briton's life to save.
Long will the Boers link Bullock's name
With deeds of valor and of fame,
For they delight in valor's blow
E'en though 'tis struck by burghers' foe.

XIII

The day is won, the battle fought;
Across the stream the guns are brought,
And quiet reigns along the glen
Save as the groans of wounded men—
Poor, thirsty victims, of despair—
Are borne upon the evening air.
Into their camp the burghers haul
Twelve wagons filled with shell and ball,
And though the world on such has frowned,
Dum-bullets¹ are by burghers found.

¹*Dumdum bullets:* These are leaden balls split into quarters at the front end, so that when it enters the body the points will separate and make a much larger and more fatal wound than a smooth bullet. All nations regard this ball as too barbarous to be used in battle. It is said that the Boers often captured British ammunition wagons which contained these barbarous missiles.

XIV

From distant hills, like farewell word,
Faint booming cannons still are heard,
But, like the sun through rifted cloud,
While still the thunders echo loud
From distant hill and ruined tower,
Proclaims the close of summer shower,
The cannons' fast receding roar
Announced the bloody conflict o'er.

XV

Beside a rock a burgher lay,
Where fell the thickest of the fray,
Whose age was three-score years and ten,
Though still as hale as younger men,
And by his side a stripling Boer;
A youth of only ten-and-four.
His boyish look and youthful face
Bore lineaments of noble race,
While his quick eye and features mild
Seemed blending warrior, man and child.
Oom Piet,¹ though, was cool and sage
Far, far beyond his tender age.
And from his grandsire at his side,
Had caught the fire of freedom's tide,

¹Oom Piet and his grandfather were killed at the battle of Spion Kop, January 24th, 1900, just one month and nine days after the battle of Colenso, but the story is placed here for convenience.

And gloried in the thought that he
Could aid his country's liberty.
Thus disproportionate in age,
Throughout the day 'neath cannon's rage
The grandson and the grandsire lay
Beneath the rock's kind sheltering stay,
And by their well-directed fire
Did many an English troop expire.
Whene'er the lad's quick piercing eye
Beheld a British column fly,
His rising joy he could not quell,
But gave a loud, exultant yell;
And, when before his Mauser's bead
A Briton fell upon the mead,
With sparkling eyes the stripling said:
"Grandpapa, look! before my ball
I saw another Rooinek fall."

XVI

Empty at length his bandolier,
Nor other ammunition near,
And ere his rashness could be stayed
He leap't before the barricade,
And from a burgher soldier slain
He took a belt, and back again
So quick, his shots were scarcely missed,
Which down the slope incessant hissed.
But ah! 'tis sadness to relate

Of this brave pair on early fate,
For when the morrow's sun arose
And far had fled the British foes,
The burghers sought the lonely kop,
And there upon its rugged top,
Beside a rock's high, steepy way
Oom Piet and his grandsire lay,
But ah! the souls of both had fled
And they were numbered with the dead.
The soldiers gazed upon the brow
Of the fair youth, oblivious now
To cannon's roar, or battle's rage,
As, side by side with hoary age,
The youthful brave so quiet lay
With lips that almost seemed to say:
"My young life was for country given,
Press thou for freedom and for heaven."
Near by beneath a quiet shade
One grave for both the soldiers made,
And side by side they sweetly sleep
Unconscious that their comrades weep
And place upon their lonely bier
The soldier's last farewell—a tear.

XVII

But, oh! thou brave and youthful Oom,
Long will thy friends weep o'er thy tomb,
And many a stranger drop a tear

Above thy brave and youthful bier.
Thou wast on earth a hero born,
Who saw but life's most early morn,
But thou hast more, far more to boast
Than all the vanquished British host.
As sparks that on the embers lie
Shed brightest beams just ere they die,
So did thy death to rays give birth
Whose beams will spread o'er all the earth.

CHAPTER XIII

Six weary months¹ have passed away,
And still the burghers stand "at bay,"
But, oh! what heartaches foes have given,
As Boers from home and loved ones driven,
Have wandered o'er their once free veldt
And every form of torture felt.
With Cronje² gone and Joubert³ dead,
The hope of many a burgher fled;
But there are thousands yet who stand
For freedom and their native land.
Pretoria fall'n,⁴ Bloemfontein⁵ lost,
And country swept by British host,
And even into the burgher's home
The Briton and the savage come,

¹*Six weary months:* The battle of Colenso was fought December 15th, 1899. This chapter begins with incidents which occurred about the middle of May, 1900.

²*Cronje gone:* General Cronje, together with nearly four thousand burghers, surrendered to Lord Roberts at Paardeberg, February 27th, 1900, and all were sent to St. Helena. Cronje was born at Potchefstroom, in western Transvaal, and was called "The Lion of Potchefstroom." I had the pleasure of meeting General Cronje and wife at St. Louis in October, 1904, and gained from them much valuable information. Mrs. Cronje told me that the general lost twenty-one sons and grandsons in the war with England.

³General Joubert, chief commander of the Boer army, died March 27th, 1900.

⁴Pretoria fell into the hands of Lord Roberts June 5th, 1900.

⁵Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, was surrendered to the English March 13th, 1900.

And many a dark, inhuman deed
Have marked the civil (?) Briton's tread.
Brave Botha, Meyer¹ and De Wet²
Give punishment to Britons yet,
And at the crest of many a kop
Compel the British hordes to stop,
And redden still their native plain
With crimson streams of British slain.
But ah! they can no longer face
The British host that now menace
Their freedom, land, their very air,
And spread destruction everywhere.
The ocean wave has borne along
A force two hundred thousand strong,
And every form of punishment
That British genius can invent
Is sanctioned by her men of trust,
Though deemed by all the world unjust,
And hopeless seems the strife and vain,
When foes, like locusts, scour the plain.

¹*Lucas Meyer*: This is the same Meyer who commanded the burghers at Talana Hill.

²Christian DeWet was one of the most wary generals of which history gives us any record. He seemed always to be just where the enemy least expected him. Several times the foe had him completely surrounded, but he was always able to find a sufficiently large mesh in the net through which to find his way out.

II

Oh, Deredepoort, long will thy name
Remind the world of British shame,
And blood of wives and children shed
Bedim the crown on Britain's head
And be redeemed, not with her gold,
But with her blood an hundred fold.

III

Lord Roberts now has chief command,
And strikes the Boers with "iron hand,"
Nor honor deems, save in his blade,
For diamonds are with honor weighed.
He is a native Kaffir's friend
Whene'er such Kaffir help will lend
To aid in his unrighteous cause,
Though it oppose eternal laws,
And win but savages' applause.
Outnumbered thus by ten to one,
Still knew the Boer to use his gun,
And many a battle still was fought
That to the patriots victory brought;
For burghers stood their homes to hold,
While Britons fought for fame and gold.

IV

When Botha from Pretoria drew
His little band—oh, sad adieu!—
And sorrowing gazed upon the hills,

The lovely fields and flowing rills,
And their loved city, once the pride
Of every burgher at his side,
His generous heart no longer kept
The fount of tears which long had slept,
For he and his companions wept.
But when he scanned the southern plain
And saw Lord Roberts and his train,
Which, but as robbers now had come
To seize the burghers' rightful home,
With clinched teeth and hard-drawn breath,
Said he, "We'll fight them to the death."
With Lucus Meyer and De la Ray¹
And Steyn², he soon was on his way
To where his men in laager lay,
And e'er the sun's cold wintry beams
With moon-tide rays adorned the streams,
And jeweled Transvaal's crystal rills,
Was safe among the eastern hills.

V

To face two hundred thousand guns
With twenty thousand burgher sons,
Would seem a task which none would care

¹*De la Ray*: General De la Ray was a Boer general of more than ordinary ability.

²Mr. Steyn was president of the Orange Free State, but he took the field at the commencement of the war and remained to the last.

To hazard, and but few would dare,
But when the wives and children stand
Between the heart and looting band,
The soul counts not the numbers met,
Except its keener wits to whet,
And as the oak of giant form
Defies the wind of threat'ning storm,
With dauntless courage burghers stood
To price their homes with British blood.

VI

But ah! Transvaal, thou'rt not aware
What heartless hordes thy foemen are,
But thou wilt learn, at country's cost,
A British foe to virtue lost.
'Tis but thy treacherous memory blurred
That bids thee trust a Briton's word,
And gives a hope that thou hast found
A Christian foe by honor bound.
If once thy memory would recall
"Sand River peace" and "Aliwal,"
And read again the promise given
That thou should'st never more be driven
A homeless wanderer o'er the plain,
Thou could'st not trust their word again.
Their solemn pledge they now ignore
And barter faith for gold and gore,
Which pledge 'twould seem was only made

To lull the Boers for final raid.
But Britain has mistook her "game"
And poorly chose the road to fame;
Her wrongs must seas of blood atone,
Ere burghers yield to British crown.

VII

A week is spent by Roberts' men
Within Pretoria's walls, and then
Again o'er hill and dale and stream
The Boers behold their lances gleam.
In all directions Britons go,
At first, in search of burgher foe,
And later, moves each rank and corps
In deathly dread of "hated Boer."
When bands are large, they win the field,
When small, they to the burghers yield,
And oft, a town which Britons win,
A fortnight gives to Boers again.

VIII

Thus, circling round, the war goes on,
Bands here today, tomorrow gone.
DeWet is trapped at night in vain;
At early dawn he's gone again,
And bands, surprised by Steyn today,
Tomorrow, find him miles away.

IX

A year goes by, foes still arrayed,

But Roberts finds no progress made,
For still nine-tenths of Transvaal lands
Are in the valiant burghers' hands.
His numerous bands cannot subdue
The farms and towns and hold them, too,
For he no sooner takes a town
And leaves behind a garrison,
Than swooping burghers raid the glen
And seize his stores and trembling men.
Lord Roberts now is much perplexed,
Nor knows what plan should be his **next**,
For with ten men to meet each Boer,
His pride forbids a call for more.
It seems, a Christian such as he,
Would now invoke the Deity,
And thus beseech a higher Power
To aid him in his sorest hour ;
But, no ; if Roberts prayed at all.
'Twas Satan heard the wailing call,
And taught him how the stubborn Boers
Might soon be swept from Afric's shores.
Perhaps he bade him call to mind
How Erin's hopes were all resigned,
When Cromwell, through the helpless slain,
Reduced the Celts to British reign.

X

An order now goes far and wide

That homes be burned on every side,
And wives and children of the Boers
Be turned upon the mountain moors,
And farms on which the children toiled,
Destroyed, where railroad track was spoiled.¹
All stock, ten miles around a break,
In railroad track, the British take,
And ladies must in prison live
Who shelter to their brothers give;
And girls, who sing their "nation's air,"
Must, too, a term in prison share.²
The Zulu bands, "a chartered crew,"³
Their depredations now renew,
And all the loot to Britons bear
And take a tithe for robbers' share.

SOLILOQUY,

The latest theologians say
That hell is all a sham,
That God's too tender souls to slay,
Too merciful to damn.

¹On September 2d Lord Roberts issued an order that in case the railroad track was damaged, the farm nearest the spot should be burned and all farms within a radius of ten miles should be cleared of stock, supplies, etc.

²Several ladies were imprisoned for thirty days for giving food and shelter to burghers, and others for singing their national hymn in the hearing of some British officers.

³British officers allow bands of Zulus to loot Boer settlements, with the understanding that all stock and other spoils are to be brought to the British and the robbers are to be allowed one-tenth of the plunder.

I've thought this matter over well,
And it appears to me
That if there is no real hell,
There surely ought to be.

XI

The burghers who are forced to yield
To greater numbers on the field,
May fare no better than the ones
Who still refuse to yield their guns,
For Britons oft a target¹ find
In those who have their arms resigned.
The wounded Boers on battle-plain
Have furnished blood the lance to stain,²
While British ghouls, when foes have fled,
Oft rob the wounded and the dead.
Their nation's rank aside they toss

¹ "A lancer, writing home, had his letter published by his admiring relative in the Brighton 'Argus.' This champion of Christian England said: 'We got a charge at them; they asked for mercy, but we were told not to give any, and I assure you they got none. We went along sticking our lances through them—it was a terrible thing, but you have to do it in a case like this.'"—(*The Boer Fight for Freedom*, p. 136.)

² Many other instances are recorded where the British soldiers killed burghers after they had been wounded or taken prisoner. When General Joubert was urged by some of his men to follow up his victory over General White (British), he replied: "It would be barbarous to pursue and slaughter a beaten Christian foe." What a contrast in the Christian idea of the two nations!

And violate the "Crimson Cross,"¹
Though deemed more sacred by the world
Than all war-banners e'er unfurled.
They seize the surgeons and the nurse
(Such act deserves eternal curse),
Nor suffer them to staunch the tide
Of bloody streams from burghers' side.

XII

A proclamation Roberts makes,
And for the Crown the country takes,
"But such pretense is surely nude
Of power to make th' assertion good,
For but one-tenth of all the land
Is subject to Lord Roberts' band."
Thus said the Boers, and still they fight
With growing zeal for nation's right,
Still willing, for their country's weal,
To face disgraceful foeman's steel.
But ah! Transvaal, thou'rt yet to learn
What base desires in Britons burn,
For ne'er was Kaffir crime so bold
But they'd increase it many fold
If 'twere required to reach thy gold.

¹At the battle of Modder River some doctors with their attendants were dressing wounded soldiers, under the Red Cross flag, when a British officer came up and arrested them all and took them to Capetown as prisoners, forbidding them to attend the wounded while waiting for transportation.

"Brave warrior" is a glorious name,
When life resigns to freedom's claim,
But when 'tis spent for selfish gain,
Stands not above the robber's plane.
The smoke of farms still upward soars,
But dauntless stand the patriot Boers,
And from their wives bereft of home
Does many a word of comfort come.

XIII

Another year has come and gone,
And still the cruel war goes on,
Nor savage threat nor burning farms¹
Incline the Boers to ground their arms.
The burning torch the British set
To farms of Botha and DeWet,
And soon in smoldering ashes lay
The house and farm of De la Ray,²
While wife and children, sad and cold,
Are turned upon the dreary wold.

¹It is related by Michael Davitt that on a certain occasion some British soldiers notified a widow that they had come to burn her home. She asked why it was to be done. "It is Lord Roberts' order, madam," replied the soldier. "What have I, a widow, done to have my children's home burned?" "The railway has been torn up a few miles away, and——" "But, surely," replied the woman, "if Lord Roberts and 150,000 British soldiers cannot protect the railway, a widow and her children cannot be expected to prevent its being injured."
—(The Boer Fight for Freedom, page 452.) Funk & Wagnalls Co., N. Y.

²The homes of Botha, DeWet and De la Ray were burned. De la Ray's wife was compelled for a considerable time to take refuge in a friendly Kaffir hut.

But these move not the warrior's heart,
With hope of liberty to part,
Nor make him more inclined to yield
To such vile foe the battle-field.
Can there be yet more heinous ill
The cup of infamy to fill?
Can schemes more hellish still be found
By which a nation may be bound?
Ah! yes, there's one, surpassing aught,
In hades born, by Satan taught,
And *concentrado*!¹ is the name
That crowns the tower of Britain's shame.
A Concentration camp is made,
And thus the brutal scheme is laid
To murder children—many scores,
And force surrender of the Boers.
Oh! hapless infants, wretched wives,
The power that seeks these sacred lives
Dares not an equal foe to face

Concentrado: This is the Spanish name for a camp in which the women and children of the Cubans were kept in prison to induce their belligerent relatives to surrender. The English resorted to this inhuman method in their war upon the Boers. They called their prison a "concentration camp," and claimed that it was formed in the interest of humanity, but there is probably no fair-minded person who is at all informed upon the subject that believes the claim to be true. He who can burn the homes of women and children, take the last morsel from their mouths, destroy even their growing crops, and thus deprive them of every means of subsistence, is surely not the one from whom we should expect any very great deeds of philanthropy.

Nor knows the meaning of "disgrace,"
But deems each life at profit sold,
If it may bring an ounce of gold.

XIV

With wire they fence the accursèd camp,
As though 'twere meant for beasts to tramp
Upon the foul and loathsome spot,
Where laws of health are all forgot;
Where swine could scarcely well be fed,
Nor decent brute would choose to tread.
Here fathers, mothers, children, all
Are kept, like beasts in filthy stall,
While food and drink, at Britain's hest,
Might well compare with all the rest.
Oh, think of wives from shelter torn,
And for their loved ones made to mourn;
The tears that dim the mother's eye
As she beholds her children die.
She bore it all, nor was there heard
Escape her lips a murmuring word,
Nor asked the burghers on the field
The freedom of their land to yield.

XV

The nobler instincts of our race
Would spurn such methods low and base,
But heartless nations, mad with wealth
Scorn not to gain by crawling stealth,

And with their power the poor abuse
For gold they cannot hope to use.
But Britain's meed will surely come,
When she will meet deserving doom,
And then thy nation towering high
Above Great Britain's sunken sky
Will spurn the proudest British brave
To be thy meanest burgher's slave.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCENTRADO!¹ Oh, speak it not,
Twill make thy cheek grow raging hot,
And fill thy heart with burning shame,
More fierce than Etna's mad'ning flame.
In that dread name there lurks a curse
More dark than aught but demons nurse,
And even satan's self would blush
And every demon's revel hush
To hear the cries for bread, of those
Who, held beneath the power of foes
As hostages, whose ransom claim
Surrender of their country's name.

¹While the term "concentrado" has been retained in this story to indicate the generally supposed origin of the brutal method of punishing wives, children, sisters and aged fathers for the continued resistance of husbands, fathers, brothers and sons, it is not at all probable that the Spaniards can justly claim priority to this valuable though eminently barbarous invention. Walter Scott, in his "Lady of the Lake," mentions the circumstance of Roderick Dhu placing the women and children on an island in Lake Katrine, leaving all the boats on the island side with no means of approach from the mainland, and then quotes the English commander as saying:

"My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
And loose a shallop from the shore.
Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,
Lords of his mate, and brood and den."

The above lines were suggested by a circumstance which took place when Cromwell invaded Scotland.

II

Accursèd scheme! infernal plot!
A country's curse, a nation's blot,
That clouds its banner's brightest spot,
Erases every deed of fame,
And fills the space with blackest shame.
More base the deed than satan's plan
To tempt¹ the wife to reach the man,
Which gave the world its primal fall.
He gave her but persuasion's call
And left her freedom unconfined
Nor dared her reason ruthless bind.
But far surpassing satan's worst
Their fury falls in mad'ning burst
Upon the helpless and the weak
(Resort that none but dastards seek),
And from their homes drag helpless wives
And babes to sacrifice their lives
To hunger's pang. Oh, cruel fate,
Why dost thou thus like fiendish hate
Consign such sacred lives as those
To gross, profane, abandon foes?

III

Oh, for a word—just one foul word,
(One never yet by mortal heard),

¹Temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden.

To name the crime—that damning shame
That foully blurs a nation's name
And pours disgrace on all who throng
Beneath its banner's harbored wrong.
If once that shapeless word were seen,
Half seen, in all its horrid mien,
'Twould haunt the soul with torturing pain
And hideous monsters wrack the brain
'Til death would be a welcome night
To rid thee of the phantom sprite;
For, from each letter blood would stream,
And with each drop an infant's scream,
And in each letter's sudden turn
A mother's heart in anguish burn,
And over all a misty pall
Of maiden's tears like burning gall.

IV

That word no mortal lips could speak;
Nay, demon's tongue were far too weak
Its even whispered tones to give,
Or touch its least import and live.
The lips would parch with liquid fire
More fierce than lightning's cloven spire;
The tongue would fall as molten lead
'Mid sounds unearthly and more dread
Than hellish fiend-song's rabble din
In that appointed home of sin.

Its mildest lisp would thunders mock,
Its softest tones perdition shock,
With voices of ten thousand tongues,
Rehearsing Britain's coward wrongs.
Wan infants' cries and sisters' throes,
And mothers' groans of deeper woes
Combined with earth's indignant rage,
(Unprecedented on hist'ry's page),
Were one confusing din so deep,
That nations yet unborn would weep,
And on the God of justice call
With groans that would the heavens appall,
Lest their unhappy lot be cast
Beneath that nation's withering blast.

V

Oh, cursèd he so shapeless framed,
Called "man," but ah! how illy named,
Whose withered heart, decaying brain
Could plan such gross inhuman pain,
And drink so deep of human ill
And thus his thirst for plunder fill,
Yet fear to meet a foe so small
One-tenth his band would cover all.

VI

May life for him be filled with woes;
His steps be dogged by vilest foes;
His food all putrid and decayed;

By every friend on earth betrayed.
May every pleasure tempt his eye,
But ere he reach it may it fly,
And disappointment deep and sore,
Unfelt by man on earth before,
Be his unhappy constant lot.
May death, though cherished, greet him not,
But let that wretched life remain
To mock his vile and fevered brain.
And when that soul, perdition-crowned,
Consents no longer to be bound
By such low-fallen worthless dust
Or animate the world's disgust,
Then downward, downward let it trend,
But not with common fiends to blend,
But to far deeper, darker cell
Than sacred Canon's pages tell,
Let his foul ghost take hasty flight;
And there in hopeless, endless night,
Where heat emits no ray of light,
May its last home of torture lie,
An outcast of eternity.

VII

Insult not earth by asking graves
For such pollute, ignoble knaves;

The wild simoon¹ were far too neat
To be such corpse's winding sheet.
But let that carcass foul be laid
By fiendish hands 'neath Upas'² shade,
Where aught with life can linger not,
Or touch that doubly death-made spot.

VIII

Here, to his name, would rise a stone
Alike to him and Britain's throne;
A marble shaft as black as night—
Not that bright black reflecting light,
But like that hazy dark that falls
From hell's own sin-polluted walls.—

IX

See'st thou where sculptor's hand hath chased,
Upon this stone so dark, debased,
A female form, of stature tall,
With features wan and haggard all?
See! with her feeble thin right arm,
As if to shield from ruffian harm,
She clasps a form with terror wild;
That is her own, her infant child.
Around her neck its arms are twined,

¹*Simoon*: A very hot, destructive wind which blows over a desert.

²*Upas*: A very poisonous tree of Java. It is said to be so poisonous that nothing, animal or vegetable, can live near it. This, however, is an exaggeration.

Upon her cheek its head inclined,
While, round its head, neglected curls
Hang like surrendered banner-furls.
Their eyes are fixed with varied stare,
With terror babe's, in hers despair,
Upon a frightful gorgon¹ face,
Where sympathy has left no trace,
But hatred like mad billows driven
Before the winds of angry heaven,
O'er that grim visage wildly spreads,
Nor heeds the tears that mother sheds.
His locks are like Medusa's² curled,
Ere Persius from its shoulders hurled
The head of her who turned the world
To stone, who e'er her features spied,
Fit punishment for haughty pride.
Thus are his locks with serpents twined,
Whose slimy folds they writhing wind
Around those horrid features cold,
As misers gripe their worshipped gold,

¹*Gorgon*: A mythological monster whose look was death.

²*Medusa*: A female Gorgon who considered herself as beautiful as Minerva, who, being displeased with Medusa's vanity, turned her beautiful hair to serpents. Medusa now became so hideous that whatever dared to look upon her was turned to stone. Medusa wished now that she could die, and Minerva dispatched Persius, who cut off her head and thus ended her sufferings.

As if in that contemptuous heart
They found at last their counterpart.

X

His murderous eye with fixen stare
Views now that mother's wan despair,
Nor softens at the melting sight
Of her despair or infant's fright,
But o'er his features seems to brood
Still greater thirst for helpless blood.
With her left hand in vain she tries
To stay the hand, where lurking lies
A gleaming dagger's murd'rous blade
That erst hath many an orphan made,
But, ere she can its flight arrest,
'Tis sheathed deep in her quivering breast.

XI

Below this scene a word appears,
Bathed with ten thousand orphans' tears:
'Tis "*CONCENTRADO*"—blighting breath—
This tells the tale—the tale of death,
And calmly o'er this brutish knave,
'Approving, Britain's colors wave.

CHAPTER XV.

Lord Roberts has resigned¹ command;
Again has sailed for England's strand,
And deems complete² the task assigned,
By method base the foe to bind.
Lord Kitchener, left on Afric's shores,
"Will soon," says he, "subdue the Boers,
Who—but a moiety—yet persist,
And struggling still, our arms resist."
He deems that fighting now is o'er,
Save now and then some daring Boer
May chance to fire from vantage spot
Or vaal-bush clump or hidden grot
On small and careless British bands,
That still are scouring burgher lands,
Who, helpless wives and children take,
And leave destruction in their wake.

¹Lord Roberts relinquished the chief British command in South Africa about December 1st, 1900, and Lord Kitchener took charge of affairs in his stead.

²Lord Roberts was rewarded with an earldom for ending the war, just seventeen months before the war ended, by which it is plain to see that tardiness is one of England's faults.

II

But, ah, Lord Roberts little knows
What hearts are in his burgher foes,
For many a tale will yet be told
Of daring deeds of burgher bold,
And many a Briton yet will fall
Who bars the course of Mauser ball.
With Kruger now to Holland gone,¹
Schalk Burgher leads the patriots on,
Nor does he try himself to shield
From dangers on the battlefield,
But on through weary day and night
He leads the thickest of the fight.

III

From Vryburg starts a British train
Of wagons o'er the ruined plain,
With ammunition carts and stores,
Across the country of the Boers.
Lord Methuen with a thousand men
Guards train and stores o'er kop and glen,
Nor does he know that De la Ray
Will soon dispute the dangerous way.
They make a camp at Rooikraal,

¹About the 8th of September, 1900, President Kruger, acting on the advice of General Botha and others, sailed for Holland. This was done partly as a matter of personal safety and partly with the hope of interesting European powers in his behalf.

Upon the borders of Transvaal,
And night is spent in jovial cheer,
Nor deem they burgher foemen near.
But, ah, the wary De la Ray
Has planned the fight for coming day,
And when the night has thrown its veil
O'er silent kop and lonely dale,
He southward moves a point to gain,
Just in the rear of camping train.

IV

With earliest rays of rising sun
Lord Methuen's train moves slowly on,
But gathering clouds o'er southern hills
Seems omen of approaching ills,
And, reading now the thundering roar,
The troops exclaim, "The Boer! The Boer!"
Half circling round the burghers come;
With sudden dash strike Britons dumb,
And sound of tramping chargers' hoof
Like pelting rain on battered roof;
The falling Britons and the dead,
Combine to paint the battle dread.
Amid the storm of flying balls
With many more Lord Methuen falls,
And British horsemen fly the field,
And footmen to the burghers yield,

While ammunition carts and stores
Are seized by the victorious Boers.

V

Brave De la Ray, this is the day
Retaliation thou canst pay,
For Methuen's is no fatal wound,
Nor art thou now by honor bound
Thy wonted high respect to show
To such a vile, unmanly foe.
But no, the burgher spurns to harm,
Though Methuen burnt his house and farm
And turned his wife and children dear
All roofless on the mountain drear;
Had scheepers¹ shot and lotter hung,
And Boer aspersions glibly sung,
And fate of Red Cross bands had sealed
For burghers on the battlefield.
The smoke of full six hundred² homes
Had veiled adjacent kopje domes,
And many a deed had stained his sword
Unworthy such an honored lord.
But all these thoughts are swept aside;

¹Scheepers was an officer in the Boer army, and was tried and executed for burning a British government building in Cape Colony. Lotter was also a minor officer, and was hung on a charge of capturing and destroying a British train.

²The British estimate of the number of farms burned is 630. This is probably far below the actual number.

They sink below the burgher's pride
Who only sees within his power
A foeman of the present hour.

VI

Lord Methuen's slight though painful wound
Is by the burghers gently bound,
And when to nearest station driven,
A full release to him is given.
But e'en this act, this noble deed,
Receives no just, no ample meed,
For, though the world astounded stands
To find such hearts in Afric lands,
This sacrifice to Christian cause
In British press finds no applause,
And women still 'neath Britain's eye
In Concentrado prisons lie.
Ingratitude! Thou monstrous thing!
More deadly thou than serpent's sting,
Nor more is hell of virtue nude
Than thou, base, vile Ingratitude!

VII

There's hurrying now for miles around,
Where'er a Briton can be found,
And flying bands for shelter haste,
By brave, determined burghers chas't.

At noon the brave Van Zyl¹ brings in
A scouting corps of twenty men,
Whom, found in some sequestered spot,
Were captured ere they fired a shot.
And now unarmed, escape is barred
By watchful eye of burgher guard.
The ammunition and the stores
Are sent to laagers of the Boers,
While dead and wounded Britons share
With suffering burghers equal care.

VIII

To De la Ray at eve is brought
A ring of gold and strangely wrought,
With guarded pass and mountains tall,
And stream that seemed much like the Vaal,
And near a maid in close duress
He sees engraved the letter "S."
He gazed upon the shining thing,
And urged his mind some thought to bring,
That might the mystery unfold
Deep hidden in this ring of gold.
At length he reached a happy thought;
Its full import the Chieftain caught,
And to his page at once he cried:
"Bring Captain Saris to my side."

¹Van Zyl, a Boer officer, purposely retreated before Methuen, thus enticing him into the toils of De la Ray.

Soon by the Chief young Saris stands,
The ring is placed in Saris' hands,
While De la Ray all self-possessed
His rising wonder well suppressed,
Nor gives he voice to his surprise,
When tears have filled his Captain's eyes.
"Know'st thou that ring?" at length he said,
But Saris only bowed his head,
For his emotion took his speech
And placed it far beyond his reach;
But soon as quiet filled his breast,
He thus his burgher-chief addressed:
"Dear Chief, if thou in me hast found
A man by laws of honor bound:
Who ne'er hath shunned a dangerous place
That promised freedom for our race;
Hast found in this poor feeble dust
A servant thou canst safely trust,
Grant me today this one request,
(Nor let me be by question pres't),
That round the wearer of this ring
I may the arm of safety fling,
Nor must thou know his name or place
Or even look into his face;
For 'tis my promise to conceal
What safety cannot dare reveal."
Brave De la Ray in musing mood,

As was his wont, a moment stood,
And with kind and tender look
The hand of his brave captain took,
And said: "I well know thou'rt too proud
To throw o'er Transvaal cause a cloud:
E'en should thy friend thy brother be,
Still can I trust our cause with thee;
And now thy friend and all his band
Unquestioned, wait thy sole command."

IX

With graceful bow and courteous word,
And eyes by tears all vision-blurred,
He gave his Chief a parting hand,
And quickly sought the scouting band,
But when his eyes met Conrad's gaze,
Again his heart was all ablaze,
And he a moment turned aside
His agitated face to hide,
But soon again he quelled his breast
And thus the British band addressed:
"Brave scouting corps, thy burning zeal
Has aided much thy country's weal,
But still thy caution's woeful lack
Hath led thee o'er a dangerous track,
Nor should'st thou hope that thine will be
A common soldier's clemency.

.

At morrow's dawn thy band must ride
Beyond the Vaal's swift-moving tide,
And there within a cavern cell
Continuous prisoners thou must dwell;
But to the band I'll speak no more;
Show me the captain of the corps."
At once they led their leader out,
Whose well-feigned marks of fear and doubt,
As he to Saris' side was led,
Filled all his band with deathly dread.
"Deal gently, friend," a Briton said,
And courteous bowed his trembling head,
"With this, the captain of our band,
Our brave and noble Billy Brande."
Now side by side they stand once more
As they had often done before,
When 'twas no crime their love to show,
Though now concealed from friend and foe.
Oh, painful joy, how rude thou art!
What pressure thine upon the heart!
When friendship pure as burnished gold
Cannot to friends or foes be told.

X

Almost unconsciously they strode
A little way along the road,
Until at least a dozen yards
Now lay between them and the guards,

And safely thus beyond the reach
Of tender word or whispered speech,
A word was spoke in Conrad's ear
'Twere death for other ears to hear.
Soon Saris left and all was still
Save sighing breeze and murmuring rill;
The light had faded from the west,
And all but guards had sunk to rest.
But no, there's one whom sleep has fled,
Nor presses yet his soldier-bed,
As in his tent brave Saris peers
Among the guns and bandoliers
To see that all is ready made
To aid the plan his skill has laid.

XI

At morn the sun rose bright and clear
O'er burghers' joy and Britons' fear,
For painfully the time draws nigh
When each must learn his destiny.
Soon Saris rode with trusty guard,
Conducting scouts along the sward
To where a cell had been prepared
And now by other Britons shared,
Where Billy Brande so soon must lie,
Shut out from friendly sun and sky.
They reach at length a lonely kop
And rest awhile upon its top,

And when again they rose to go
Brande gave a signal soft and low.
With sudden dash each Briton's steed
Has gained at once his greatest speed,
And hurrying down the kopje's side
The daring men tumultuous ride.
To north, to south, to east, to west,
The scouts in wild disorder prest,
While from the guards on kopje's spire
Came constant roll of Mauser fire.
With perfect aim the burghers shot,
Yet not a bullet found its spot,
And firing guardsmen deemed it strange
That though within such easy range,
No flying steed or Briton falls
Before such shower of Mauser balls.
But, ah, brave guard, 'tis not thy aim
Nor trusty gun that is to blame;
No wonder 'tis that none are killed:
Thy guns with harmless "blanks"¹ are filled.

XII

The scouts are safe in British lines,
But none, save Brande, the cause divines,
As round their campfires they repeat

¹*Blanks:* These are cartridges containing powder but no balls. Saris is supposed to have placed these in the guns during the night.

Their daring flight,—their dangerous feat,
And tell how gallantly they fled
'Mid whistling bullets overhead,
Each by his friends a hero made,
For such a daring escapade;
While guards, all stripped of martial pride,
Attempt discomfiture to hide,
As into their unwilling ears
Pours constant stream of comrades' jeers,
With many a boast: "Before my gun
No Briton thus unharmed could run."
How strange the human mind is made!
What shallow depth for it is laid!
Oft would its reasonings be disgraced,
If side by side with instinct placed.
It seems to mount the stars of heaven,
And ride the thunders flying leven,
But fathoms not the smallest things
That o'er the surface Nature flings.

CHAPTER XVI.

At noon the sun with tropic heat
Its melting rays on Kroonstad¹ beat,
Nor is a sheltering cloudlet driven
Along the deep blue vault of heaven.
Birds, which at morn such warblings made,
Have hushed and sought the oaky shade,
While herds, which from the Valsch have drank,
Now panting lie upon its bank,
And languid view o'er stream and town
The summer beams come pouring down.
The housewives leave the busy broom,
For comfort seek the coolest room,
And watch the quiverings o'er the dell
Of heat almost unbearable.

II

Near to the town upon the glen
There stands a sad, inhuman "pen,"
Around which British guardsmen tramp;
That is the Concentrado² camp.

¹Kroonstad is a town on the Valsch river, in the northern part of Orange Free State.

²One of the concentration camps was at Kroonstad.

Here, countless,¹ helpless children lie
Beneath December's burning sky,
Watched o'er by mothers wan and pale,
Whose prayers and tears can naught avail,
As they behold their children die,—
The price of Britain's perfidy.
No record tells of savage race
With brutal acts more vile and base,
Nor history's page more deeply dyed
With gross, wholesale infanticide,
Except it be when this same power
Had sought fair Erin's peaceful bower,
And Cromwell, with his "Iron Hand,"
With infants' blood had drenched the land.

III

The sun moves down the western sky,
Advancing shadows eastward lie,
Though none along the camp are sent
Save those of men or tattered tent,
Or children wan or maidens pale,
Or mothers swept by sorrow's gale.
All ended now the poor repast,
(With many it will be the last),

¹There were about 50,000 children in these camps, 14,000 of whom died in about nineteen months. There were also about 45,000 women, with a few men whose age rendered them unfit for field service. All these were really hostages, whose only ransom was the surrender of their country.

And some in groups are gathered round,
While others sadly stroll the ground
To ponder o'er their wretched state,
Or silent mourn their country's fate.
Still lower sinks the evening sun;
Another day will soon be done,
Though dying day's departing light
Brings but another mournful night.

IV

Approaching now upon the green
A British officer is seen,
Whose duty 'tis to view the ground
Ere darkness o'er the camp has frowned.
With archèd neck his restless steed
Now swiftly bears him o'er the mead,
Nor does he draw the charger's reins
'Til Concentrado camp he gains.
The guard unlocks the ponderous gate,—
Fell acme of the burghers' hate,
Which, all too soon, must seal their fate.
In, through the door, the soldier springs,
His courser's housing gaily rings,
And soon the rapid hoofbeats fall
Along the path beside the wall.¹
Near to the path a maiden stands,

¹The wall of these camps was only a barbed wire fence,
well guarded by soldiers.

Where now she seeks with folded hands
The throne of heaven for strength and light
To guide her soul through coming night,
Nor knows that man or horse is near
Until the footfall strikes her ear ;
And turning round in quick surprise
The British officer she spies,
Then half in fright and half disdain
Resumes her solitude again.

V

The soldier marked her sudden fright,
And pitied her unpleasant plight,
For though her arms and face were brown,
And sadly worn her faded gown,
Still was there left from fortune wrecked
An air compelling his respect.
Unconsciously the soldier staid
His restless charger near the maid,
And gazed upon her as she prayed ;
And, though he strained his ear, he heard
Nor sob nor sigh nor spoken word.
He knew not why he could not move ;
It was not fear, could not be love,
For, fear, his heart could never own,
And love for strangers was unknown.
He saw her raise her face to heaven
As if she sought to be forgiven,

"But sure," thought he, "no cause is there
For sinner's penitential prayer."
Each motion now he closely scanned
Of head, of arm, of folded hand,
And, though disheveled was her hair,
Some auburn curls still rested there,
And round her neck beneath those curls,
He caught a glimpse of shining pearls.

VI

She turned at length, her gaze to place
On his two years' unshaven face,
And gently said, "Why standest thou,
With sorrow on thy martial brow?"
For, though his face was mild and fair,
Some marks of sadness lingered there.
"If thou art ill, no help is found
On Concentrado's prison ground,
For poorly 'tended, here we lie,
When ill, to suffer and to die."
She paused and watched the soldier mum;
That voice of yore had struck him dumb,
For now he knew, as long ago
When last they met on Limpopo,
He stood again to her unknown,
Nor scarcely dared his name to own,
And felt again within his soul
The flames that baffled his control.

Too proud to weep, too strong to fly
He gazed into her hazel eye,
And when his speech returned again,
Said, "Della, 'tis your own O'Kane."

VII

Like swaying bands of equal foes,
Alternate flush and pallor rose,
Each in its turn, to Della's cheek,
Nor could she stay the rising tide
Of withered love, and doubt, and pride,
Or find a sudden voice to speak.
But soon her cooler senses gain
The self-possession of her brain,
Though with the thought of former years
There came a burst of sudden tears.
In that brief moment, as she stood,
Was many a varied scene renewed,
As joy and hope and present plight
All stood before her mental sight.
She saw her home of years ago
Upon the bank of Limpopo,
And heard again the pebbly rill
That rippled gaily down the hill.
Again she heard the morning thrush
Pour out its song from karoo bush,
And saw her mother's smiling face
That any spot on earth would grace,

And shared again a brother's glee
Hid now in dark obscurity.
Again she felt her rocking boat,
As on the stream she seemed to float,
And stood again within the bower
Where mockingbirds had cheered the hour,
And felt the thrill that love had given
When first 'twere sent to her from heaven.
Again she heard the words of love
Avon O'Kane, so like a dove,
Had poured into her willing ear;
Words she delighted most to hear.
She passed o'er all these pleasant scenes
So filled with all that pleasure means,
And then she viewed the changes, such
As only war's dread horrors touch.

VIII

She saw their home, their pleasant cot,
An ashen heap, a ruined spot,
While the gay brook of former years
Seemed watered now alone with tears.
She saw her father, once so gay,
On battlefields now far away,
And mother, kindest soul of all,
Held now by Concentrado wall.
Her boat that once such pleasure gave
On Limpopo's light rippling wave,

No longer held the fisher's reed,
But served the British plunderer's need;
And murdering bands now tented where
Once stood her sacred bower of prayer.
She saw Avon when once he stood
A modest youth so brave and good,
And when again, for wealth and pride,
He ruthless cast her love aside.

IX

'Twas but a moment, but the soul
From nature's laws brooks no control;
She flies at her self-chosen pace
And mocks alike at time and space,
Nor do we know what forms are given
To souls on earth or those in heaven.
The souls of men their cycles make
And naught reveal except their wake,
Like rays of light that crown the hill,
But are themselves invisible.

X

With trembling lips and weeping eyes
The maid at once to him replies:
"Thou wast not false? Then why didst thou
Not keep thy word, thy parting vow,
And come once more to Limpopo,
Where last we met so long ago?"



The soldier from his courser sprung
His sword against its scabbard rung,
And ere she could remonstrance mete
Avon was kneeling at her feet.



XI

The soldier from his courser sprung,
His sword against its scabbard rung,
And ere she could remonstrance mete
Avon was kneeling at her feet.
“Dear maid, the world I would have given—
Almost my meagre hope of heaven—
Had not the Fates with cruel jar
Between us rolled its ponderous car,
And rendered sad these weary years,
And dewed my pillow oft with tears.
But time forbids that I rehearse;
Delay may prove our safety’s curse,
For soon the sun its beams of red
Will hide behind yon mountain-head,
And on my way I must be found
Around this loathsome prison ground.
And now, oh, maid, can prayers and tears
Atone for these two absent years?
And vows again sufficient be
To trust again thy heart with me?”

XII

“Oh, dear Avon, my heart is yet
As true as when, with nuptials set,
We stood within that sacred bower
With hope as bright as morning flower.
Thy sword and pride no barrier stand
To this poor heart, but to my hand;

And though my father's on the field,
And brother's fate to me is sealed,
And my dear mother, worn with age,
Is in this prison's horrid cage,
And I, who naught of harm have done,
Held here beneath the burning sun,
Yet naught shall change my purpose high
A martyr for my land to die."

XIII

Avon arose, but on his brow
A radiant calm seemed resting now.
He stood before the lovely maid
And in impassioned accents said:
"Dear Della, thou'rt more true and brave
Than those who seek a hero's grave,
For they hope honor while they live
And life for fame undying give,
Whilst thou thy life an offering make
Alone for land and freedom's sake.
Such sacrifice to righteous cause
Should win for thee the world's applause.
Thou art as pure as sorrow's tear;
Too brave and true to suffer here,
And now I pledge to thee my word
No more to serve a British lord,
For thou to me art dearer far
Than all the gifts of honor are,

And richer far that hand of thine
Than all the gold of Afric's mine.
Now, listen, maid: when dawn's first ray
Shall paint the east with coming day,
Seek thou once more this hallowed spot
While still the stars the heavens dot,
And 'neath yon stone of curious shape
Thou'lt find a plan for thy escape,
Nor any, save thy mother, tell
Of these, my words; sweet maid, farewell."

XIV

The soldier bounded to his steed,
Nor felt his foot the stirrup's need,
And soon his charger's bolting tramp
Was heard around the prison camp,
And guard remarked, "Thou'rt riding late,"
As he again swung back the gate.
Poor Della watched with anxious eyes
Her proud Avon as on he flies,
And when behind eve's dusky screen
Nor man nor horse was longer seen,
Back to her tent she turned her way,
Where, on a wretched bed of hay,
In quiet sleep her mother lay.
Though soft her step, her mother woke,
Her slumber fled, her quiet broke,
And sorrow took its wonted place

In sighing soul and troubled face,
But when the joyful news was told,
Her saddened heart, though worn and old,
Almost forgot its present pain
In hope of liberty again.
A moment silently she stood
And hope from every angle viewed,
And when at length her mind she fixed
And doubt with hope had sadly mixed,
She whispered soft in Della's ear:
"Dear daughter, there is much to fear,
For, though we well might trust O'Kane,
His plans may all be laid in vain."

XV

With foam and blood his rowels wet,
Avon sped on; the sun had set,
And twilight deep had settled down
O'er kop and veldt and lonely town,
But ere the turf with dew was damp
O'Kane had reached the British camp.
A hasty meal; his charger fed;
Nor dreams he now of rest or bed;
His plans are laid; his guards are bribed;¹
A letter wrote with plan described,
And when the sound of "All is well"

¹The guard is only supposed to have been bribed to allow Avon to scale the wall unchallenged.

At midnight hour the guardsmen tell,
His flying steed is rushing back
Upon the short but hasty track;
The wall is scaled and 'neath the stone
The note is placed and all is done.

XVI

With calmer soul and quiet pace
Again Avon his steps retrace,
And soon upon his tented bed
He tries to rest his weary head,
But sleep has, like a phantom, fled.
With resolution firm at last,
A thousand scenes go whirling past,
That like bright visions seem to rise
Before his sleep-deserted eyes.
He sees the mother and the maid
In British uniform arrayed,¹
On British chargers mounted high,
And thus deceive the gateman's eye.
He sees the maid and matron wait
In this disguise before the gate
Of Concentrado's loathsome yard

¹The supposed plan is, that Avon would on the next evening invite a couple of his British comrades to visit the concentration camp, and while they are being entertained by ladies at a neighboring tent, Della and her mother would array themselves in a British uniform which Avon would furnish, and mounting the comrades' horses, would pass out with Avon and make their way to a burgher camp.

'Til he commands the watchful guard,
When open wide the portal flies
And all pass out before his eyes.
He views them riding through the night
In search of friendly burghers' light,
And by the gray of morning's dawn,
All safe where burgher lines are drawn.

XVII

Thus rose the visions of O'Kane,
And coursed along his sleepless brain,
For love brings fancies brighter far
Than all the visions born of war.
How happy is the mortal's lot
Contentment binds to some dear spot,
Beyond ambition's jarring din,
With peace and love alone within!

CHAPTER XVII.

At early dawn fair Della rose
From dreams too joyful for repose,
For scarce could sleep so soft descend
But it with liberty would blend,
And thoughts so sweet would slumber break,
And instantly she was awake.
In happy dreams again she strolled,
Where Limpopo's bright waters rolled,
And in the morning's balmy air
She sought again her bower of prayer.
She thought Avon was by her side
As long ago in burgher pride,
But when of love he gently spoke
With joy ecstatic she awoke,
And saw but tent—poor tattered pall—
Surrounded by a prison wall.
When sleep again had closed her eyes,
A thousand joyful scenes would rise:
Perhaps a rain-crow's warning note;
A thrush's song or gliding boat;
A shady tree and pleasant book,
Or fish in some sequestered nook,

But when Avon the silence broke,
Sleep fled her lids and she awoke.

II

Thus wore away the restless night
With longing wish for coming light,
And when from eastern mountain brown
Morn's first gray streaks came slyly down,
Out through the twilight all alone
She sought that shapeless treasure-stone.
She stood a moment by the spot;
Through all her soul bright visions shot,
But, as it were some warrior's head,
She looked upon the stone with dread.
But soon her courage took command,
And steadier grew her trembling hand,
And she removed the stone with care,
But, ah! no treasure rested there.

III

Oh, wretched maid, does Fate ordain
That thou must bear still greater pain?
Has it 'til now reserved its worst
Thy brave though tender heart to burst?
Ah, yes, thy brightest hopes have fled,
And sorrow bows thy drooping head.
Like flowers beneath the chilling frost
With all their brightest petals lost,
Thy soul must droop in this sad hour

Beneath the blight of British Power.
But, oh, dear maid, link not O'Kane
With cause of this, thy sorest pain;
No braver hero lives than he,
And throbs his heart alone for thee,
And heaven reserves its mildest curse
For heart than his supremely worse.
For thee he dared with dauntless soul
Beneath that stone to place the scroll,
But other ears than thine had heard
"For thy escape," that secret word,
For just beyond the prison wall
A wary guard had heard it all.
Oh, that he had in secret brought
His plot matured by stricter thought,
And silent placed it in thy hand,
Unseen by friend of British band.
But, ah, too rash was he to think
How near he stood to danger's brink,
Too restless when a single hour
Should find thee held by British power,
And thus the snare impatience set,
That he so soon must sore regret.
But, ah, 'tis done, his plans are known,
For which no mercy will be shown,
And thou a prisoner still must lie
'Neath Concentrado's burning sky.

Back to thy tent, Oh, hopeless maid,
For grief far deeper still is laid
For thee beyond the future's shade,
And long the world will curse the Crown
That bows thy head with sorrows down.

IV

At dawn Ayon O'Kane arose;
Said he, "This day will surely close
My service to the British Crown,
And my ambition for renown.
My fate I'll link with fairer hand
Than that which grasps a bloody brand,
For Della Dorn is braver far
Than all the cruel sons of war."
His visions wild and sleepless night
Quenched not his eye's quick-piercing light,
Nor could observer close have said
That he had pressed a sleepless bed.
His look so bold and head erect
In each detail was circumspect,
And as he mused, he thought, "I'll ride
Tonight with my fair future bride,"
But at his tented door he found
A heavy guard was drawn around.

V

Oh, let me not attempt to tell
The height from which his spirit fell,

Or to describe what thou may'st guess
He felt for Della Dorn's distress.
To deepen well Avon's disgrace
Upon his wrists the gyves they place,
And by the court that gathered round
Avon O'Kane was guilty found,
But ere the sentence dire they reach
They grant Avon a moment's speech.

VI

"Brave warriors, hear!" Avon began,
"By whom I'm placed 'neath treason's ban;
Though broke I laws by England given,
I'm guiltless still in sight of heaven,
And e'en though death my sentence be,
I scorn to beg thy clemency.
I ask but freedom for a maid,
Fair, hostage prisoner of thy raid,
And her dear mother worn with age
Who cannot live in such a cage.
Grant this request, and let me hear
My sentence howsoe'er severe."

VII

Avon had paused, the Chief replied,
While still Avon he closely eyed:
"O'Kane, thine is a grave offense,
And I am pained to send thee hence.
Thy crime deserves thy instant death

And grave upon the potters' heath,
But, for thy service to the king,
I shelter thee with mercy's wing.
On St. Helena's lonely isle,
Among the prisoners mean and vile,
Thy future home through life will be
For thy base infidelity.
Thy one request will not be given
Even though the stars should fall from heaven.
I know naught of the worthless jade
Thy fancy paints as 'charming maid,'
Nor can I turn them on the moors,
Lest they assist the fighting Boers.

VIII

With burning cheek Avon arose,
Said he, "This hand the Chieftain knows;
But for these fetters of disgrace
Thy blood would stain this trenchant place
Else thou retract thy 'worthless jade'
Applied to noble burgher maid.
See'st thou a tremor in this eye
That says O'Kane would fear to die?
Canst thou not find within this breast
A heart thy marksmen's skill to test?
I court thy worst, thou canst but kill,
'Twill aid thy cup of shame to fill.
For gold thy vassals dare to die,

Why not for love of freedom I?
And should I 'scape yon island cage,
Though bent my form with hoary age,
Still be thy heart my target made
For memory of thy 'worthless jade.' ”

IX

Avon retired with fettered hand;
Aside the chief called Billy Brande,
And thus he spoke beneath his breath:
“I should have made that sentence death.
Choose thou a guard and take O’Kane
Where vessels lie upon the main,
That soonest on Helena’s isle
Will land him in his long exile.
But watch thou well, his heart’s aflame;
His hand unerring in its aim,
And should’st thou find some trivial cause,—
Risk not thy life, nor fear the laws.”
“ ’Tis well,” said Brande. “Let guards be short,¹
Two Kaffir blacks from Deredepoort,²

¹*Short:* Few in number.

²About six weeks after the war began the British planned an attack on Deredepoort, a small trading post in the northern part of Transvaal. A band of Kaffirs was employed to do the butchering act on this occasion. They entered the village at three o'clock in the morning and made a frightful carnage, killing men, women and children. Brande is supposed to desire members of this Kaffir band as his guard, in order to retaliate.

For surely three with rifles can
Guard one unarmed and fettered man."

X

The blacks are called, at noon they start,
Each knows his station, each his part,
And soon across the veldt they wind
And leave the British camp behind.
Avon and Brande are side by side,
The Kaffir guards behind them ride,
And as on varied themes they rest,
Each uses tongue he speaks the best.

XI

At length said Brande, "Count not me rude,
Should I unwittingly intrude
Upon thy spirit's gentler part
To learn the secret of thy heart.
Can it be true, as thou hast said,
Thou'rt bound with gyves for Transvaal maid?
Did thy heart's passion make thee wild
To risk thy life for foeman's child?
And does thy heart still unrepent
That thy attempted aid was lent?"

XII

"Ah, Brande, she is no common maid
For whose escape my plan was laid;
She is the 'fairest of the fair,'
With hazel eyes and auburn hair,

Whose snowy neck and glossy curls
But mock her band of glittering pearls.
Her voice is music, and her port
Too well would grace a British court,
And in her smile are beams of light
That banish sorrow's darkest night.

XIII

"I met her full two years ago
Upon the banks of Limpopo,
Where, by that bright and lovely stream
We 'even dared of love to dream;
But cruel war tore us apart
And wrecked my soul and broke her heart,
And now I'm doomed to foreign isle,
And she, to British prison vile."

XIV

Avon now wept, nor did he turn
To note, in Brande, intense concern,
But when he named the "Limpopo,"
Brande's cheek was lit with fervid glow,
And vivid scenes of childhood came
All clustering round that sacred name.
But, ah, brave Brande, still must thy soul
O'er thy heart's passion keep control,
For soon a word will reach thy ear
Thy heart is unprepared to bear.
But be thou firm as agèd oak.

That yields to naught save lightning's stroke,
Or as the mountain's stately rock
That e'en defies the thunder's shock.

XV

"Brave Brande, I have but one request,—
And that already thou hast guessed,—
When back to Kroonstad thou return,
If safe for thee, I pray thou'lt learn
If still the maid's a prisoner there,
And bear to her, for me, a prayer.
Tell her that on my prison isle
I'll not forget her lovely smile,
For though between the ocean rolls,
United still will be our souls,
And though beneath misfortune's blast,
Avon will love her to the last.
Her tent is near the prison wall,
Where shades of evening latest fall,
Beside a brown and stony hill
With not a tree or winding rill.
Thou'lt know her by her auburn curls,
Her lovely eye and glittering pearls,
For she's the fairest maiden born,
Her name is Della,—Della Dorn."

XVI

Poor Brande! his face was deathly wan;
His heart had sorrowed for Avon,

But now his tears were burning hot,
For now he mourned a sister's lot.
For such sad tale his soul was weak;
He dared not sob, he could not speak,
But, as they silent rode along,
He felt his soul grow doubly strong.
At length he said: "Ah, brave O'Kane,
'Tis sad that thou should'st suffer pain,
And for thy gentleness and care,
Through life a prisoner's lot to share.
But worse! who spoke of 'worthless jade'
Thinks now that thou'rt my target made.
I saw thee stand before the court,
Brave object of each menial's sport;
I heard the Chief spurn thy request,
And saw the heart-throbs of thy breast,
Nor have I meant that thou should'st while
Thy life, a prisoner on that isle:
But promise thou'lt in hiding be
'Til war is o'er, and thou art free;
But these vile Kaffirs, dark and fell,
Must not be left the tale to tell.
At Kaffir hut thou'lt find disguise
Thy form to hide from prying eyes,
And when the drums of war shall cease
And war-pipes sound the notes of peace,
Where odor-laden zephyrs blow

Come thou again to Limpopo."
Avon was speechless, but to Brande
He offered now his fettered hand,
And when his hand the trooper took,
His friendly grasp its shackles shook.

XVII.

Near by within a lonely glade
A camp for evening meal was made,
And near Avon the careless guard
Had placed their arms upon the sward.
The gyves were loosed, a gun was fired,
At once the Kaffir guards expired,
Into the air Brande fired his gun,
Avon was free and all was done.
O'Kane, approaching Billy Brande,
Now took the trooper's offered hand
And said: "Thy grace hath saved O'Kane,
I hope, dear Brande, we'll meet again,"
And giving Brande a wish of good,
He disappeared along the wood.

XVIII

Brande, for a moment, stood and eyed
The forms, whose blood the heath had dyed,
And then, with breath indignant, said:
"But poor thy worthless lives have paid
For children's blood of Deredepoort
Shed but to aid thy gory sport,

Nor will my vengeance half be filled
'Til all thy band like thee are stilled."

XIX

With beams of early morning, Brande
Was back at Kroonstad with his band,
And soon the Chief, in secret, sought
To know what news the trooper brought.
"So soon returned? What of O'Kane?
Is he now safe 'neath gyve and chain?"
"Ah, Chief, thou well hast known of Brande,
And how unerring is his hand,
For, even though loose may be my aim,
None hope a closer mark to claim.
At evening meal in lonely glade
A careless guard his gun had laid
Full near the hand of brave O'Kane,
And both my guards at once were slain.
I saw them fall, I heard the roar,
My Mauser spoke,—I'll say no more."

XX

"Well hast thou done! I know the rest,
And well for thee 'twas not thy breast
That gave him mark for hasty shot,
Else had thou fall'n upon the spot,
For his was not the hand to err
Though he should aim on moment's spur,

And e'en thy Chief was nervous made
By his offense at 'worthless jade.' "

XXI

Four weary months have come and gone,
But still th' unholy war goes on,
And children still in prison lie
And, by the foe unheeded, die.
Today the burgher cause is worse,
Tomorrow, Britons meet reverse,
While Steyn and Botha and DeWet
Entrap the foe in many a net,
And Hertzog,¹ Smuts² and De la Ray
Harrass their bands from day to day.

XXII

Another month nor horrors cease
With whisperings of approaching peace,
But rages still the unequal fight
For burgher's gold and burgher's right.
Three hundred thousand Britons fail
To make their dauntless foemen quail,
But Concentrado's tale is told,
And hearts of burghers' once so bold,

¹*Hertzog*: Judge Hertzog was a member of Orange Free State Councils, and also an able commander in the war. His wife was one of the sufferers of the concentration camp.

²Commandant Smuts was attorney general of Transvaal, and one of the most brilliant commanders in the Boer army. His little daughter died of hardship and exposure after the family was forced from home.

Are forced to yield,—Their struggle's o'er,¹
And Afric's sons are free no more.

XXIII

With mingled joy and patient grief,
From war alone they find relief,
And when they reach the ruined home,
To lids, long dry, fresh gushings come,
For many a wife and lovely child,
Whose song had cheered the lonely wild,
By British hand a grave had found
Near Concentrado's murder-ground.

¹Peace was signed May 31st, 1902, nearly thirty-two months after the war began. History probably fails to give us a single instance in which a victorious nation ever gave more liberal terms to the vanquished than England was forced to give the Boers, although for about two years their only answer to proposals for peace had been "Unconditional surrender." The Boers were to be released without punishment, were allowed to retain their arms, prisoners were to be returned to their homes at British expense, and instead of requiring an indemnity, England paid them \$15,000,000 for the farms which they had burned and for other purposes, and, in addition, proposed a loan of other sums without interest for two years. Other liberal concessions were also made.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Beside a bright and rippling stream,
The site of many a happy dream,
Where constant murmurings soft and low
Are borne from waves of Limpopo,
There stood an uninviting tent,
Whose slackened cords and tattered rent
Would scarce suffice a breeze to stay
Or parry sun's bright tropic ray.
Before the tent an aged man
With facial type of burgher clan,
Alone in seeming sorrow stood,
Completely wrapped in solitude.
Within the tent were mutterings heard
Of song or incoherent word,
And round the tent there seemed an air
Of sad neglect of woman's care.

II

A passing stranger turned aside,
As though he would a moment bide
To rest beside the wretched tent,
For age his form had sadly bent.
His dark blue eyes seemed clear and bright,



Before the tent an aged man
With facial type of burgher clan
Alone in seeming sorrow stood
Completely wrap't in solitude.



Though beard and hair were snowy white;
His clothes were faded, worn and old,
And sorely rent at many a fold.
His face seemed furrowed now with care,
But, showed, when young, was passing fair,
And for his lame, unsteady gait
A heavy cane bore up his weight,
And, though his voice with clearness rung,
His accent was of foreign tongue.
“My friend,” said he, “in sadness thou?
What sorrow clouds thy agèd brow?
Hast thou no wife or daughter fair
Or son with thee thy grief to share?
Nor do I seek by query rude
The secrets of thy solitude.
But if my soul one pang can lift
And to its own thy burden shift,
Then glad, though stranger, would I share
With thee the grief that resteth there.”

III

“Dear stranger, thine’s a noble soul;
E’en now my griefs more lightly roll,
But death alone can bring relief,
When depth of soul is depth of grief.
See’st thou yon heap? That ashen spot
Was once my home, a happy cot
Where, blessed with daughter, son and wife,

Mine was indeed a happy life.
Alike the friend and stranger came
And shared the rich and poor the same,
For though are bles't those who receive,
Thrice blessèd he who loves to give.
But ah! sad years have wasted all,
And life itself seems but a pall
That settles o'er my longing breast
To hide from me *eternal rest*.

IV

Four years ago, yea, more than four,
My son sought Erin's verdant shore,
And full two years no word has come;
I fear he found a watery tomb,
For at this hour his form may sleep
Beneath the billows of the deep.
Last night I dreamed my boy had come
To once more glad this cheerless home;
My shout of joy the stillness broke;
The vision fled and I awoke.
But ah! my dear and patient wife
A victim fell to British strife,
For frame so weak and worn with age
Could not endure the foemen's rage;
And now, oblivious to the flood
That Britain shed of helpless blood,

She sleeps beneath a sacred mound
Near Concentrado's guilty ground."

V

He paused his feeble voice to rest,
And calm the tumult in his breast,
And thought he saw a tear-drop trace
Its way adown the stranger's face,
As questioned he with sorrow's thrill:
"What of thy daughter? Lives she still?"
"Ah, stranger, it were long to tell
Of all that noble girl befell,
Nor could I hope to make thee know
All she hath felt of earthly woe.
In yonder cot, a lovely child,
Her happy, tender years she whiled,
Nor had she known a sorrowing heart
'Til she had seen her brother start
Upon the voyage for which he yearned,
To Erin, whence he ne'er returned.

VI

She loved a youth, Avon O'Kane,
And thought her heart bestowed in vain
'Til in the prison, near her tent,
They met again by accident.
Escape was planned, Avon was caught,
Before the court a prisoner brought,
And there condemned to long exile

On St. Helena's lonely isle.
But soon the word through prison sped
That brave Avon O'Kane was dead,
For, in a far and lonely glade,
He an attempt for freedom made;
But there he fought a desperate hand,
The heartless Briton, Billy Brande.
My daughter fell as she were dead,
A shriek she gave, her reason fled,
And now, with wrecked and ruined brain,
All earthly hope for her is vain.
At yester morn a fever came,
And slowly sinks her withered frame,
But she has naught from death to fear,
For she has lived a Christian here.
And oh! dear stranger, would that **God**
Might place this form beneath the sod,
And take this soul, with hers, above
And let me rest with those I love.

VII

The stranger turned his face aside
His heaving breast and tears to hide,
And, near, he saw a soldier come
Arrayed in British uniform.
Straight to the man before the tent
With hurried step the soldier went,
And said: "My dangerous task is done,

Dear father, I'm thine only son."
The father kissed his noble boy
And wept the tears of inward joy,
And while he pressed his youthful face
He felt a loving son's embrace.
"Oh, Conrad, dear," the father said,
"I long have wept my son as dead,
Nor hast thy grief on earth begun
'Til thou hast mourned an only son."

VIII

The stranger took the soldier's hand
And said, "We've met again, dear Brande,"
But ere the wondering youth replied
He cast his mask of age aside,
And stood before them once again
The young and brave Avon O'Kane.
"And thou art Conrad?" still he said,
While through his brain a mystery sped;
"Then why wast thou with Britain's band,
Nor fought for home and burgher land?"
"Avon, thou art no subtle foe,
Nor do I fear that thou shouldst know,
For e'en my life were scanty cost
Since country, home and friends are lost.
I've served my native country well,
Nor by this hand a burgher fell;
The British trap and wily net
By Billy Brande were often set,

And fall of British thousands planned
Oft by the 'daring Billy Brande.' "

IX

With cautious step, into the tent
The father, brother, lover went;
A flood of tears the brother shed
And knelt beside his sister's bed;
Nor knew she that her brother wept,
For she a quiet moment slept.
He brushed aside a wandering curl;
"Oh, sister, thou'rt a precious girl;
Why did I not, three years ago,
Come back again to Limpopo,
And help to soothe, with brother's art,
Thy noble, pure and broken heart?"
She woke, and in disjointed strain
She sang of "Conrad" and "O'Kane,"
While shattered song and wandering eye
Told of the mind's inconstancy.
"They say I'm mad and reason fled;
I've but been living with the dead,
And Concentrado wall but keeps
The horrid bed where mother sleeps."

X

She slept again, but soon awoke
With a bright smile, as though there broke
Upon her weak and wavering mind

Some pleasant memory well defined.
"I've slept," she said, "and dreamed again
Of my dear brother and O'Kane,
But ah! such dreams are all in vain."
"This is thy brother! Daughter, see!
Thy brother Conrad kneels by thee!"
"And is it true? And art thou here?
Dim is my eye and dull my ear.
Ah, yes, 'tis true!" She raised her arms
Bereft of all their beauteous charms,
And as she drew her arms around
Her long-lost brother, lately found,
She said, "In stormy time thou'rt come;
Even now I hear the battle-drum."
"Nay, sister, Transvaal war is o'er;
We'll hear the sounds of war no more."
"And did we win?" "No, sister, no,
Our arms have yielded to the foe."
"Nay! arms of Boers would never yield!
'Twas Concentrado won the field.
But ah! dear brother, brave O'Kane
By Billy Brande was ruthless slain,
And in a deep and lonely glade
His lovely form uncoffined laid.
And oh! I sorrow most that he
Gave his dear life alone for me."
"O'Kane, dear sister, is not dead,

Even now he kneels beside thy bed.”
“And does he live? What glorious word!
Oh, that I had but sooner heard.
Give me, Avon, thy hand once more,
As in the happy days of yore,
When, by the stream’s low moaning tide,
Thou dared’st to claim me for thy bride.
Choose thou some flow’r from out the dell
Of those that we have loved so well,
And near the stream’s bright rippling wave
Thou’lt let it bloom above my grave.
And oh! dear father, come thou near,
My voice grows weak, thou can’st not hear.”
The father knelt beside her bed,
But she was still—her soul had fled.

XI

By Limpopo a grave was made
Beneath her oak-tree’s branching shade,
And there, within that sacred bower,
Where oft she prayed at twilight hour,
A Concentrado victim sleeps
And o’er her grave a soldier weeps.
The Limpopo’s soft murm’ring tide
Still winds its course to ocean’s side,
And Vaal’s unruffled sparkling waves
Now careless pass the heroes’ graves.
The blood that purpled stream and bank,

Which they long since unwilling drank,
Like veteran's scars in time of peace,
No sympathetic tears release.
The soldier's tramp and cannon's roar
Are heard along their banks no more,
And 'neath each kop and battle-field
Lies many a hope of country sealed.
The race by whom those homes were built,
Whose blood was for their country spilt,
Whose voice was once in Volksraad¹ heard
Nor for their country's good demurred,
Who saw no dread in foeman's frown,
Are subjects now of British crown.
The hope that once inspired their souls
Now, like a turbid river, rolls
The blood-stream through the heart's slow beat,
But spurns the hopeless word "defeat."
The stranger stands beside the stream
Recalling many a gallant theme,
But sheds no sympathizing tears
O'er the lost hopes of former years.
The world's great fount of tears is dry,
Nor throbs the heart for brother's sigh,
For commerce sways a nation's heart
Which nature formed for gentler part.

¹*Volksraad*: The national council.

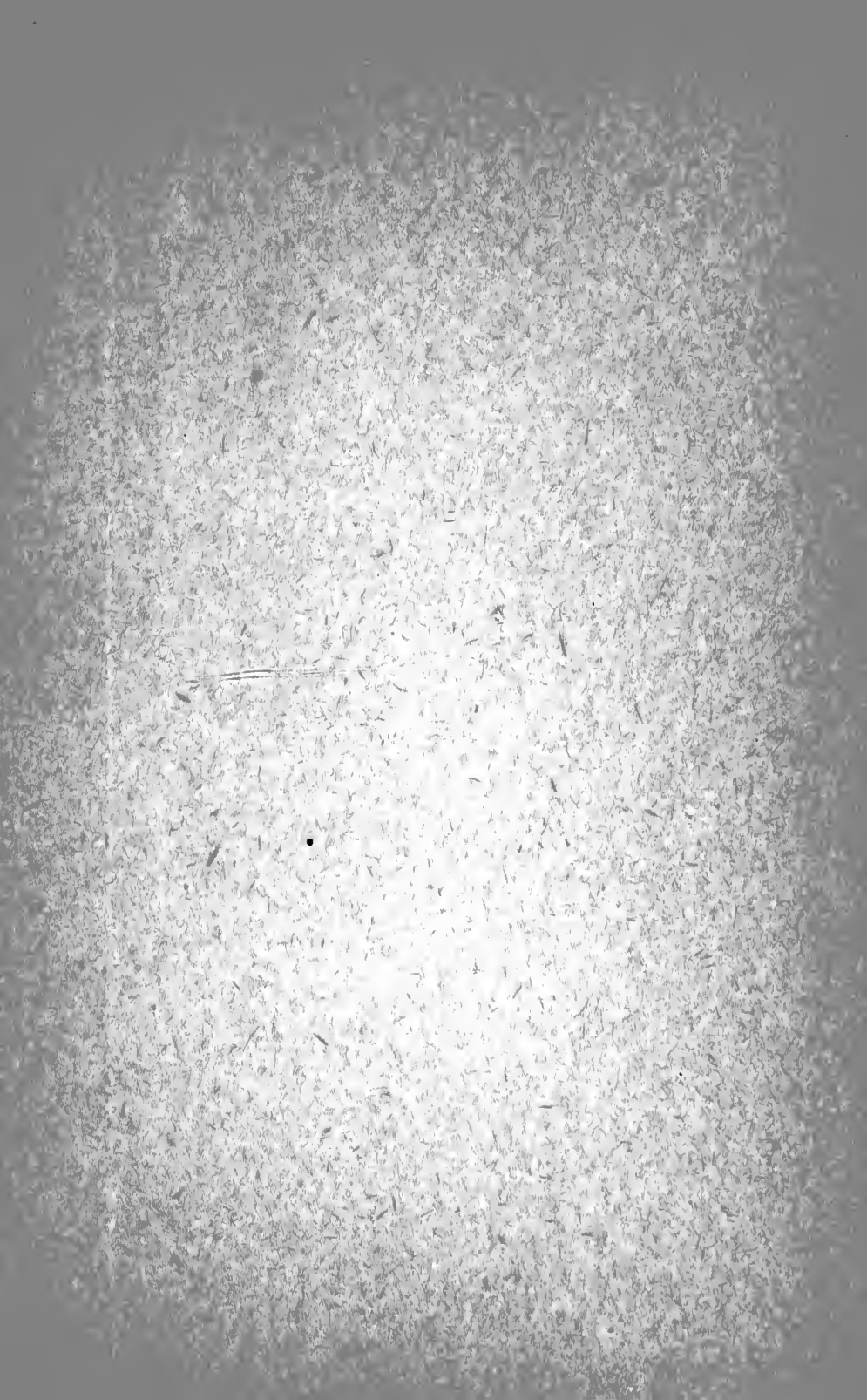
But some great hero yet will rise
With dauntless soul, and just and wise,
And recompense an hundred fold
Great Britain's thirst for power and gold.
When Justice sleeps, the vow she makes
Brings retribution when she wakes,
And Britain well may watch the hour
Transvaal beholds her waning power,
For sons of Transvaal's dauntless braves
Cannot be held Great Britain's slaves.











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